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MEMOIRS

OF THE

REV. JOSEPH BENSON;

BY THE

REV. JAMES MACDONALD.

Quando ullum invenient parem?—HORACE.

NEW-YORK:

PUBLISHED BY N. BANGS AND T. MASON, FOR THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

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PREFACE.

BIOGRAPHY, especially when it has for its subjects characters truly great and good, is a species of composition highly acceptable to pious and intelligent readers. But of all biographical productions, those are generally found the most interesting which contain faithful accounts of the lives and labours of holy, learned, zealous, and able Ministers of Christ. Amongst characters of this description, Mr. JOSEPH BENSON occupied a distinguished rank, during the space of half a century. Almost every city or town of note, in Great Britain, was either occasionally or statedly favoured with his able and powerful ministerial labours. He seems, on several accounts, to have stood in the esteem and affections of the Wesleyan Methodists, next to their venerable Founder. Nor was he, perhaps, less esteemed or beloved by those pious and orthodox Christians of other denominations, who occasionally sat under his ministry. Many of these, in common with the Methodists, anxiously expect the publication of his life. The author now submits it to their candour, not "with frigid indifference," but without being either elated or depressed. He knows too well the different tastes and clashing sentiments of readers in general, to imagine that all the parts of the work will obtain the approbation of even such as will approve of it as a whole, or that it will escape the censure of formalists, heterodox professors of Christianity, persons disaffected to Government, or bigots of any denomination. He has endeavoured, and that with a considerable degree of anxiety, to furnish the public with a true picture of his learned and invaluable friend, with whom, during six years, he lived in the closest habits of intimacy. The subject of his work he found to be, what a judicious correspondent styled him, "a man of day;" and, hence, was under no temptation, in delineating his character, to represent him either different from, or superior to, what he was in reality.

Attentive readers will, in perusing the following Memoirs, be able to accompany Mr. Benson through every stage of his religious, ministerial, and literary career. They will see him in trying situations, and very different circumstances. His taking

leave of his father at an early period of life, in connection with the fact, that he saw him no more, will affect their tenderest sympathy.

His being cut off, by his Tutor at Oxford, on account of some irregularities of a purely religious nature, from all hope of graduating, and, consequently, of regularly becoming a Minister of the Church of England, will be deemed censurable by the generality of readers. It cannot be doubted, that his preaching occasionally, and his connection with the Methodists, were disapproved by his Tutor and other learned men at the University; but still it is matter of surprise, that, on account of those irregularities, and without his ever having been admonished to relinquish them, he was subjected to a censure more severe than he would have incurred, had his conduct been proved immoral. That part of the work which contains an account of those matters, will be perused by many, with peculiar interest.

From the mention made by Mr. Benson, in the course of his Journal, of various persons, books, and subjects, the Author has derived an opportunity of making such observations as, he hopes, will not be found unworthy the approbation of the generality of his readers. To young persons of talent, and others, possessed of good sense, but whose reading has been much confined, those observations will probably be found as acceptable as the contents of any other parts of the volume.

In the course of the work will be found, the Author's sentiments on a great variety of subjects. It will appear, that his attachment to that body of Christians amongst whom he has had the honour and happiness of exercising his ministry, during a period of nearly forty years, has not lessened, in his estimation, any pious and orthodox followers of the Lord Jesus, whether Churchmen or Dissenters. Though fully persuaded, that the doctrine of General Redemption is founded in truth, he has, from principle, not policy, aimed, throughout the work, to avoid every sentiment calculated to give the least offence even to a single individual of the thousands of pious and intelligent characters who embrace the opposite doctrine. To him the points still at issue betwixt Calvinists and orthodox Arminians, have long appeared matters of mere opinion, on which the wise and the good may safely differ. Hence, it afforded him peculiar pleasure to have it in his power, without deviating from his original plan, to mention in strong terms of esteem, such excellent men as JOSEPH ALLEIN,

JOHN BUNYAN, PHILIP and MATTHEW HENRY, ARCHBISHOP LEIGHTON, DR. WATTS, DR. DODDRIDGE, and President EDWARDS.

Pious and intelligent readers, who possess a competent knowledge of the nature of civil society, and know how to appreciate the British Government, will not be displeased to find the work, in various parts, interspersed with sentiments of loyalty. They know that civil obedience is a religious duty; and that the primitive Christians, even when their numbers were formidable, and they were at the same time grievously persecuted, never thought of rising in rebellion against their oppressors. This historic fact is mentioned, not with a design to produce a controversy on the subjects of *non-resistance* and *passive obedience*; but for the purpose of showing that true Christianity, exemplified in its professors, is opposed to "all sedition, privy conspiracy, and rebellion."

To such readers as maintain with Mr. TOOGOOD, that their dissent from the Church of England, "is a debt they owe to God, and an act of allegiance due to Christ," those parts of the volume in which that Church is mentioned in terms of esteem and veneration, will be least acceptable. But in this enlightened and liberal age, in which Churchmen, Dissenters, and Methodists, frequently meet together in the genuine spirit of Christian love, for the purposes of disseminating the word of life throughout the world at large, and of sending Missionaries to "preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ," it is presumed that *few*, if *any*, well-informed individuals, maintain that their dissent from the Church of England, is the "genuine consequence of the allegiance due to Christ," and that, consequently, all who do not dissent, have renounced that allegiance. Of passing so severe and unwarrantable a censure we know the generality of our dissenting brethren are incapable. They found their dissent, not upon a supposition that men may not, in the Church of England, manifest their allegiance to Christ by lives eminently holy; but upon, what they conceive to be, the advantages they possess, in a more efficient ministry, and in matters of church-government. They are, what may be termed, mitigated Dissenters, distinct from, but not hostile to the Established Church; and hence were the pulpits of the Establishment, in general, occupied by men of talents, piety, and zeal, thousands would, by regularly attending divine service in their parish-churches, *cease* to be Dissenters. Meantime, it is proper to observe, that however men of piety.

sense, and candour, may decide upon the present and ultimate consequences of conformity or dissent, they will readily admit, that, in the present state of things, the labours of orthodox Dissenters, as well as those of the Methodists, are essential to the spread of pure religion throughout the United Kingdom. Conformity or non-conformity, any farther than it is calculated to promote the glory of God in the enlargement of Christ's kingdom, is light as the small dust upon the balance, in the estimation of those who are truly alive to eternal realities. Thousands of this description may be found amongst Churchmen, Methodists, and Dissenters, who, notwithstanding their avowed difference of sentiment on points of minor importance, know that their *faith* is one; and hence, instead of contending with each other, they love as brethren, and cordially unite to promote the interests of their common Christianity.

Portsmouth, Sept. 15, 1822.

MEMOIRS

OF THE

REV. JOSEPH BENSON.

METHODISM, considered in its rise and progress, together with its moral and religious effects, is a phenomenon in the Christian world, little, if at all, inferior to the Reformation. This assertion will not surprise any who have made themselves acquainted with the state of morals and religion at the period when the two Wesleys and Whitefield began to preach, with apostolic zeal, the pure doctrines of Christianity, contained in the Articles, Homilies, and Liturgy of the Church of England. In that iron age of our Church, very few of the Clergy either preached or understood those doctrines. From the time of the restoration till that period, the great mass of British Protestants, both Clergy and Laity, had, in point of morals and religion, continued to deteriorate. In what gloomy, but true, colours, did Archbishop Tillotson and Bishop Burnet, both men of piety and learning, paint the state of religion in England thirty years before the rise of Methodism ! The former of these excellent Prelates, in the fifth volume of the edition of his sermons printed in 1700, says : “ If one of the Apostles or primitive Christians should rise from the dead, and converse with us, how would he wonder to see the face and complexion of Christianity altered from what it was in his days ; and were it not for the name and title which we bear, would sooner guess us to be any thing than Christians.” Again : “ I cannot see how Christianity can ever gain ground in the world, till it is better adorned and recommended by the professors of it. Nay, we have just reason to fear, that if God do not raise up some great and eminent instruments to awaken the world out of its stupid Lethargy, that Christianity will every day decline, and the world will be overrun with atheism and infidelity.” —“ Our Ember-weeks,” says good old Bishop Burnet, “ are the burden and grief of my life. The much greater part of those who come to be ordained, are ignorant to a degree, not to be apprehended by those who are not obliged to know it. The easiest part of knowledge is that to which they are the greatest strangers ; I mean the plainest parts of the Scripture, which, they say, in excuse of their ignorance, that their tutors in the universities never mention the reading of to them ; so that they can give no account, or at least a very imperfect one, of the contents

even of the Gospels. Those who have read some few books, yet seem to have never read the Scripture. Many cannot give a tolerable account even of the Catechism itself, how short and plain soever. They cry, and think it a sad disgrace to be denied orders, though the ignorance of some is such, that in a well-regulated state of things, they would appear not knowing enough to be admitted to the holy sacrament.

“The case is not much better in many who, having got into orders, come for institution, and cannot make it appear that they have read the Scriptures, or any one good book since they were ordained: so that the small measure of knowledge upon which they got into holy orders not being improved, is in a way to be quite lost.”

No effectual barrier was raised against the floods of infidelity and immorality which were inundating almost every town and village in the land, at the time those great and good Bishops wrote, until the few clergymen already mentioned went forth, at the risk of their lives, to preach in fields, streets, or wherever they could' obtain hearers, the pure doctrines of the Reformation. But what a moral and religious change has taken place since that time! Dr. Haweis, in his Church History, published many years since, says, when noticing Methodism, “It hath spread in a prodigious manner among those of the Church as well as Dissenters from it; and has been the means of rekindling the zeal of many, so as to produce a vast alteration for the better in the conduct of thousands and tens of thousands. Predilection for the Establishment strongly attaches many to it, who have received their religious impressions from one or other of the Methodist societies, or from some of their own clergy, who lie under the imputation of being methodistically inclined, that is, such as literally and with apparent zeal inculcate the doctrinal articles they have subscribed, and live in a greater state of piety and separation from the world than the generality of their brethren. The number of these, of late, is amazingly increased. Where before scarcely a man of this stamp could be found, some hundreds, as rectors or curates in the Established Church, inculcate the doctrines which are branded with the name of Methodism; and every where throughout the kingdom, one or more, and sometimes several, are to be found within the compass of a few miles, who approve themselves faithful labourers in the Lord's vineyard.”

When the late Rev. John Wesley began to form religious societies, he had no more idea that his doing so was, even remotely, connected with his being at the head of a religious denomination, than Luther, when he began to reprobate the sale of indulgencies, had of becoming the grand instrument of causing whole nations to separate from the church of Rome. Wesley, who may be justly styled the Luther of his age, was, like the great Saxon Reformer, led by a chain of providences, over which he had no control, to adopt measures which, at an early stage of his

ministerial career, he would have condemned as subversive of all religious order, and opposed to the best interests of Christianity. Educated in high church principles, on which he conscientiously and rigorously acted for a series of years after his having been ordained; nothing short of what he conceived to be his imperative duty could have induced him to take a single step not warranted by that Church, which, to the end of his life, he maintained to be the best constituted National Church in the world.

Had the pious clergymen to whom he wrote, in order to effect a union with him and each other, for the purpose of spreading vital religion in the Church, come into his measures, it is highly probable that he would have continued through life to maintain, that none, without episcopal ordination, however learned and pious, have a right to preach the Gospel. But though the union he proposed was compatible with clerical order, very few of those whom he addressed on the subject, vouchsafed him a reply. This is mentioned merely as an historic fact, and not intended as the slightest censure of the conduct of those ministers, of whose piety, zeal, and talents, Mr. Wesley formed a high opinion.

But had the projected union taken place, it might not, in its effects, have reached the many thousands of the poor, who were evidently like sheep without a shepherd; but to whom, by the instrumentality of lay itinerant preachers, were carried the good tidings of salvation. Had Mr. Wesley, instead of being prevented from preaching in the church, been raised to the dignity of a bishop; he might, like Bedell, Burnet, Horne, and other pious and learned prelates, have laboured, but with little success, to reform the clergy of his diocese. Nor might he have failed to point out to them the sin and danger of dissent. His uncommon talents, learning, and piety, would have done honour to any office in the church to which he might have been appointed. But He, in whose power are the times and the seasons, destined him, as events have proved, to labour in a larger sphere of usefulness than the first episcopal See in the world, would have afforded him.

The lives of the Founders of religious bodies have at all times formed a part of biography which has strongly excited the attention of mankind. And that this should be the case is not matter of surprise; since to cause such revolutions in the stubborn prejudices of men as they have been the instruments of causing, argues either something extraordinary in themselves, or singular in the circumstances in which they were placed.

The life and labours of the great and good Founder of Methodism have already excited amongst all ranks throughout the United Kingdom no ordinary interest; and they increasingly will do so, as long as that revival of true religion, of which, under God, he was so great an instrument in producing, shall continue to spread throughout the world. With respect to those who at an early period of Methodism came for-

ward to the help of their illustrious leader, and with him inculcated the pure principles of Christianity amongst thousands who had neither the form nor the power of godliness ; and, as is generally the reward of such services, bore the contempt of the great, and the insults and violence of the low ; however great may have been their natural abilities ; whatever the mental acquirements of some of them, and however great their labours and privations, or extensive their usefulness ; their fame must of necessity be contracted within much narrower bounds. But this with them was no object. To them whose names are written in heaven, a name on earth is beneath a thought. Still the memory of the just is blessed ; and the recollection of the pious zeal and apostolic labours of the Fathers of Methodism, will ever continue to be cherished by the members of the body to which they belonged ; and all candid lovers of Christ who make themselves acquainted with their early history.

As we advance in the history of Methodism, when it had assumed considerable form and consistency, and its preachers began to be numerous ; we find that to some of them, God, who wisely varies the talents with which he entrusts his servants, gave powers of mind of a superior order, to the sanctified operation of which, by means of both the pulpit and the press, Methodism is much indebted for its past and present prosperity. Here many might be mentioned, whose memory will be long honoured. But without wishing in the slightest degree to detract from the well-earned fame of those men, who at various periods did honour to and defended the religious body to which they belonged ; we think there are few who know any thing of his piety and zeal ; his long, unwearied, and most useful labours, both literary and ministerial, who will hesitate to admit, that none deserve a fairer name in the annals of Methodism than JOSEPH BENSON.

His ancestry can be traced no farther back than the register of Melmerby, which is no more than 120 years old. His grandfather, Miles Benson, died at Melmerby, September 6, 1732, at the age of fifty-nine years. Ann, his wife, died January 26, 1767, when about ninety-nine or one hundred years old. His grandmother's maiden name was either Robinson or Jameson ; it is not certain which. Their issue consisted of John and Sarah, and of a son, who died when only one year old. Sarah married Jonathan Watson, who was the father of Joshua Watson, whom God made the instrument of Mr. Joseph Benson's conversion. His father, John Benson, married Isabella Robinson on November 7, 1731, at Melmerby, in Cumberland, by whom he had three sons and four daughters, all of whom were born at Melmerby. All these died before their parents, except the subject of this memoir, and his sister, Ann, who lived to old age, at Bishop Auckland and Durham.

Mr. Joseph Benson's father possessed an estate left him by his father. He removed from Melmerby about a year after the birth of his son

Joseph, and went to a place called Huddleskeugh, where he continued to rent a farm for nine years. From this farm he removed to one at Netherharescuegh, where he remained about seven years. Having disposed of his estate at Melmerby, for about £600, he went to reside with his daughter at Bishop Auckland, where he died at the advanced age of seventy years.

Though he was, upon the whole, a moral man, it does not appear that he was duly convinced of the importance of eternal things till near the close of life, when he afforded sufficient evidence that a divine change passed upon his mind; after which, on November 7, 1769, he died happy in God. Mr. Benson's mother, having survived her husband about ten years, died at Bishop Auckland, near Durham, December 6, 1779, at about the seventieth year of her age. Her remains were deposited in the same grave with those of her husband.

From a child she was exemplary in her conduct, and delighted much in reading and prayer. After becoming a mother, she regulated her household in strict conformity with the views she had of religion. All under her care were enjoined the duty of regularly attending the worship of God at church; and she was in the habit of calling them together, after their return from it, for the purpose of reading the Scriptures.

More than ten years before her death, she received a sense of her acceptance with God; nor did she ever after, though exercised with severe trials, cast away her well-grounded confidence. Mr. Benson says in his Journal, "She had no doubt of her acceptance with God, through the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom alone she trusted for salvation: and just before she breathed her last, she said, 'The God of Israel is my God, both now and for ever,' which she repeated three several times." Mr. Benson then adds, "She was a daughter of affliction, having suffered much pain of body for thirty years, and many tribulations from other quarters; but she bore all with the greatest patience and resignation, but more especially her last sickness. Her chief affliction was so severe a rheumatism in her bowels, that she had very little ease for a whole month, during which time she ate nothing, her only nourishment being a spoonful or two of some liquid, taken occasionally."

Mr. Joseph Benson, the subject of this memoir, was born January 25, 1748, at Melmerby, in the parish of Kirk Oswald, and county of Cumberland, and baptized on the 21st of the following month. With his parents, who were not wanting in affection for any of their children, he was a particular favourite. His father designed him for the ministry in the Established Church. In early youth he was serious and thoughtful, and so attentive to his books, that he could rarely be prevailed upon to amuse himself with his school-fellows.

After having acquired the first rudiments of learning at a village school, he was placed under the tuition of Mr. Dean, a Presbyterian

Minister, at a place called Parkhead, in the same parish. Of this tutor's method of teaching he spoke, long after he was capable of forming a correct judgment, in strong terms of approbation. He was in the habit, after saying his lessons, to read them over again to himself, that he might the better remember the remarks which had been made by his tutor. Not satisfied to be instructed merely in the languages and literature of ancient Greece and Rome, he even then manifested a desire to acquire some knowledge of Divinity, and for this purpose, he seized every opportunity of reading the books on that subject, which he found in his tutor's library. In this manner he repaired, in some degree, the deficiency of means he possessed at his father's house; where, it appears, the old *Whole Duty of Man* and a volume of indifferent Sermons, besides the Bible, constituted the whole stock of religious books. So diligent was he in the acquisition of knowledge, that in those boyish days he did not suffer a moment to pass unemployed. Hence, when he had finished his regular exercises for the school, he employed the rest of the evening in useful reading: and to do this, he retired to one end of the hall, remote from the fire, even in the coldest weather, while his mother and the female servants were employed in spinning, and the men-servants amusing themselves near the fire. In vain did his mother use her influence to persuade him to abandon such close application; so eager was he to obtain knowledge, and such a sense he had of the value of time.

To his hardy manner of life when young, as a second cause under God, may be attributed the bodily strength and general good health he possessed till near the close of life. He often accompanied his father's men-servants when they went, with long poles, in search of sheep buried in the snow.

In very early life, the Divine Spirit, by operating upon his mind, discovered to him the vanity of the world, the evil of sin, and the necessity of an entire devotedness to God. When not more than seven years of age, he frequently retired to call upon God in secret; and often in the fields, after meditating upon heaven and hell, did he kneel down and pray for grace, that he might obtain the former, and escape the latter. There was one occasion, in particular, which he often afterwards recollected, when he pleaded with great earnestness and tears those words of Jacob, "If God will be with me, and keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on,—then shall the Lord be my God."

At the proper age he was confirmed, and took upon himself the vows made by his sponsors when he was baptized. He was in the habit of writing down as much of the sermons he heard at church as he could, a short time after, remember, hoping, by that method, to promote his spiritual interests. But with all his attention to modes and forms, he had

not at this time clear or correct views of either Law or Gospel, nor did he properly know either God or himself.

Having remained under Mr. Dean's tuition till he was about fifteen or sixteen years of age, he became a teacher in a school at Gamblesby, in Cumberland. He continued about a year in this situation. It was during this time, and when in the latter end of his sixteenth or beginning of his seventeenth year, that God, by the instrumentality of his cousin, Joshua Watson, convinced him that notwithstanding the regularity of his outward conduct, he must obtain the pardon of his sins, and experience "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness," in order to his being happy in time or eternity.

He was in the habit of visiting his cousin, who, about this time, was awakened, by means of the Methodist Preachers, to a sense of his guilt and danger. The change he observed in his discourse and behaviour excited his astonishment. Instead of entertaining him, as formerly, upon subjects relative to this world, his cousin almost immediately began to speak of matters of a spiritual nature. He then requested his company up stairs, which request being complied with, he said, "Now kneel down;" and after he had prayed with great earnestness, he said, "Now, Joseph, you must pray." Joseph, as might be expected, was considerably agitated in his mind, upon the occasion, but nevertheless he endeavoured to pray in the best manner he could. At this time, his cousin was under deep conviction, and earnestly seeking gospel salvation. About six weeks after this, Mr. Benson, accompanied by his sister, paid another visit to his cousin Watson, whom he found reading the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. He read aloud with much animation, "There is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." "Joseph," said he, "do you feel this? Do you know that there is no condemnation to you?" and proceeded to ask him several other important questions. Mr. Benson, lost in astonishment, could scarcely know what to think upon the subject. On his way home, he remarked to his sister the manifest alteration in his cousin, and the happiness depicted in his countenance. This aimable relation, who interested himself deeply in Mr. Benson's spiritual concerns, lent him some of Mr. Wesley's sermons, and advised him to hear the Methodist preachers. His cousin now became more dear to him than ever; to him he looked up as to a spiritual guide, visited him as often as possible, and heard the preaching which he recommended, particularly that of the venerable Mr. Hopper, of whom some account will be subsequently given. The law soon came home to his conscience in its full force; pronounced him guilty, but could not justify him; he heard the thunders of Mount Sinai, and was afraid. In this state of mind, with the exception of some gleams of comfort, with which he was occasionally visited, he remained for about the space of ten months; after which, by

believing in Christ, he was freely justified, and assured of God's pardoning love.

His own account of his conviction for sin, and subsequent deliverance from guilt, is as follows :

"When I was about sixteen years of age, it pleased God, by means of conversation with a cousin of mine, to convince me that I was not in his favour, since I did not know my sins pardoned. I was more and more deeply made sensible of my alienation from God, by continuing to hear the Methodists, with whom I was united, and was in great disquietude and distress almost continually for about ten months, till the Lord gave me to believe in his Son, and shed abroad his love in my heart. I may observe I was not without some gracious drawings from God, and transient tastes of his goodness at times, during that distress ; but for about seven or eight weeks before it was given me to believe, I was powerfully tempted to despair of ever obtaining mercy. Satan thrust sore at me, and I was in horrid agony : when I kneeled down to pray, I could not pray : it seemed as though the heavens were brass, and not to be pierced. My tears, I saw, availed nothing. I was sorely impatient, and ready to give up all for lost. But, glory be to God, he turned my heaviness into joy, and made light to spring up in my heart."—This plain account of Mr. Benson's conversion to God, written when he was eighteen years of age, is highly satisfactory.

His cousin became a useful local preacher in the Methodist Connexion. In November, 1798, when Mr. Benson was on a visit to his relations, he had an opportunity of seeing him once more. "Although," saith he, "he is now an old grey-headed man, yet his faculties do not seem at all impaired : and he retains the lively joy and placid smile which a sense of the remission of sins, and of the divine favour inspired him with, and produced, thirty-three or thirty-four years ago. He is still alive to God, still adorns the Gospel ; and is still in some measure useful in preaching it in all parts of the neighbourhood, where a door is opened."

In his seventeenth year, Mr. Benson was persuaded to wait upon Mr. Wesley ;* and he went to Newcastle-upon-Tyne, in hope of meeting

* It may be inquired, What was Mr. Benson's object in "waiting upon Mr. Wesley?" To this question it is difficult to give a correct answer, as this part of Mr. Benson's history is involved in much obscurity ; he himself not having left materials, from which his motives for so doing can be gathered, and the recollections of his friends are very imperfect. From considering the length of time which he stayed first at Newcastle, and also at London, before he went to Kingswood, it seems clear that he must have left home almost immediately after he "first tasted the pardoning love of God, and was enabled to yield himself up as one alive from the dead."

From the time that his mind became enlightened in divine things, he could not but feel a natural desire to enjoy more frequent opportunities of hearing the word

him there in December, 1765. On leaving home at that early period of life, he had little or no hope of ever again seeing the place of his nativity. His father accompanied him as far as Alstone Moor; when, to use Mr. Benson's own words, they "parted from each other with floods of tears." His father was greatly affected at the thought of seeing him no more; which so proved in the event.

After walking over the Fells, as the high and bleak mountains are called, which separate Cumberland from Northumberland, he had the mortification to find, on his arrival at Newcastle, that Mr. Wesley had, some time before, set off for London. After remaining at Newcastle several weeks, he engaged a passage on board a vessel for London; which, not sailing as soon as he expected, he set off on foot in the depth of winter. When he had proceeded as far as Ferry-Bridge, he providentially met with a gentleman acquainted with Mr. Wesley, and who inquired into the particulars of his case. This gentlemen, who could not bear the thought of his going on foot, paid his fare to London. But how great must have been his disappointment on coming there, not to find Mr. Wesley. He remained in London about four weeks, enjoying with gratitude to God the great privilege of christian fellowship; and on March 11, 1766, Mr. Wesley appointed him to the office of Classical Master of Kingswood school.†

Deeply humbled beneath a sense of his unworthiness, and thoroughly sensible of the insufficiency of created good, to satisfy an immortal spirit; Mr. Benson, on November 8, 1767, expressed himself as follows: "I am convinced that temporal things are comparatively nothing; that eternal things are all; and that, consequently, my chief business is to secure the salvation for my own soul. I believe one great cause of my having lived so little to God, has been, that my excessive application to study has prevented me from duly attending to private devotion. I have studied, I doubt not, with an intent to glorify God, by being more useful

of God faithfully preached, and to live more in the society of that people to whom he was now so much attached, and *whose God* he had chosen for *his God*. This desire would be increased by the opposition manifested by his father to his joining the Methodists, and the little opportunity afforded him at home for improvement in religious knowledge, either from private reading, or the public means of grace. His cousin Watson had introduced him to some of Mr. Wesley's Preachers. They were desirous of bringing forward any young man of talent, studious habits, and decided piety. The vacancy for a Classical Master, in the School at Kingswood, was mentioned to him, and probably one of the Preachers promised to write or speak to Mr. Wesley in his behalf.

As has been stated, he went to Newcastle, in hope of meeting him; but Mr. Wesley had left the preceding August, and does not appear to have visited it again that year. Mr. Benson waited several weeks for a letter from Mr. Wesley, after which he set out for London, in the manner described in the Text.

† For some account of this school, see an Appendix.

to others ; but my own soul demands my greatest attention : and indeed I see, that to be useful to others, I must myself live near to God. I betake myself, therefore, to thee, O my gracious God and Saviour, and would renew my covenant with thee. And that I may no longer be unfruitful, I rely upon thee for grace to regulate my conduct according to the resolutions I now form. But these, O my God, like all my former resolutions, will be broken, unless thou renew my soul in righteousness, and enable me to be watchful."

The resolutions here referred to are excellent ; as a specimen, we insert the following.

" 1. To rise at four o'clock in the morning, and go to bed at nine at night. Never to trifle away time in vain conversation, useless visits, or studying any thing which would not be to my advantage.

" 2. To be careful to maintain private prayer, and not to be content without communion with God in it. To spend from four to five o'clock every morning, and from five to six every evening, in devout meditation and prayer : and at nine in the morning, and at three in the evening, to devote a few minutes to prayer."

" 6. Let me with a single eye, not for praise, instruct the boys diligently in useful learning, and see that they make as great a progress as possible. Let me, especially, endeavour, depending upon divine influence, to impress a sense of the things of God upon their minds, at the same time that they are instructed in the principles of religion."

The remarks which precede the resolutions, as well as the resolutions themselves, evince the sound judgment and eminent piety of their author. An excess of application to study, not study within due bounds, he censures. It is certain, that unsanctified study has been essentially injurious to the best interests of many possessed of great natural abilities. This, however, was not the case with Mr. Benson ; for, with a pure intention to glorify God, he pursued his various studies, and hence they were instrumental in furthering his progress in the divine life.

That he endeavoured to act consistently with the resolutions he formed, in order to his being wholly devoted to God, will not be questioned by any who know with what diligence he acted upon every plan which he adopted for the purpose of promoting true piety in himself or others.

His frequent complaints of himself chiefly arose from the clear views which he had of the spirituality of the divine law, and of God's infinite rectitude and purity. From the beginning to the end of his christian course, he carefully avoided pharisaism on the one hand, and antinomianism on the other. He well knew that all pretensions to inward religion, if not accompanied by a holy life, are founded in delusion : and that the best obedience of the most eminent saints on earth is, though sincere and universal, still so defective, that it cannot possibly gain

acceptance with God but through the merits and mediation of the Great High Priest of their profession.

In May, 1768, we learn that several of the children at Kingswood School were much affected with divine things. On this subject Mr. Benson says, "O Lord, the work is thine; to thee be all the glory!"

Before this period, but during the time he was at Kingswood, from the occasional difficulty of obtaining the services of regular preachers there, he was persuaded, though much against his inclination, not only to engage in public prayer, but sometimes to preach to the colliers in that neighbourhood. Devoid of natural talents for extemporary speaking, he was thus gradually trained to those exercises, which were to form so important a branch of his usefulness in the following years of his life. Yet at this time, he appears to have had no idea of becoming a regular preacher in Mr. Wesley's connexion.

Early in June he, to use his own expression, "felt sweet intercourse with God." With warm gratitude he recollected various instances of the Lord's gracious dealings with him, from as early a period of life as he could remember; and thoroughly persuaded, that all persons and events are in the hands of the "Parent of Good," he earnestly prayed that his path through life might be pointed out; and expressed strong desires to adorn his Christian profession, both in life and death.

Under date July 25, 1769, Mr. Benson wrote out a list of classic works, and of many of the most approved books that have appeared in the English language on a great variety of subjects, on which he was in the habit of making observations as he perused them. About this time, he finished Locke's *Treatise on the Human Understanding*—Butler's *Analogy*—the *Ancient part of the Universal History*—Euclid's *Elements*—and began Newton's *Principia*. The avidity with which he pursued his studies, is a proof that, considering his uncommon capacity, his attainments in various branches of science, but especially in the sublime science of Divinity, must have been extraordinary.

The Countess of Huntingdon had about this time established a Seminary at Trevecca, in South Wales, for the education of young men of piety, belonging to any denomination, who, when prepared, were to be at liberty to enter into the ministry, either in the Established Church, or amongst other classes of Christians. The young men were allowed to stay three years, during which time they were to be instructed, clothed, and boarded, at her Ladyship's expense. From the high opinion the Countess had of Mr. Fletcher's piety, learning, and talents, she invited him to take the superintendence of this seminary; which he did without fee or reward. And through Mr. Fletcher's advice, Mr. Benson was induced to accept the office of Head-Master of the College, to which he had been previously recommended by Mr. Wesley. But at that time Mr. Benson could not take up his residence at Trevecca.

Therefore, having paid only a short visit to the Seminary in January, 1770, he continued at Kingswood till the spring following. It will illustrate the correctness of his views on the subject of Divine Providence, to insert a paragraph from his journal, in which he adverts to this change of situation :—

“November 27, 1769.—I have this last year, in general, had the desire of my heart turned towards God, and have been led to pray much and fervently, that he would make me holy and useful in the world, and dispose of me in life, as may be most for his glory. The first thing that Providence seemed to point out to me was Lady Huntingdon’s College at Trevecca. The time, however, was not come for my leaving Kingswood. * * * * I have lately seen my way plain, and concluded on going to Trevecca. I pray God to direct my way, and make me useful in every station to which I may be called by his providence.”

For some time he was well satisfied with his new situation in Wales. The young men were serious, and made considerable progress in learning, and many of them seemed to have talents for the ministry. Mr. Fletcher visited them frequently, and was received, Mr. Benson says, “as an angel of God,”—or, “like Elijah in the schools of the Prophets.” But both Mr. Benson and Mr. Fletcher were soon to be removed from their superintendence of this Institution, for which, whilst connected with it, they had felt a solicitous regard, and had exerted themselves with much success. It appears that, during Mr. Benson’s absence at Oxford, where he was keeping terms in the University, which he had begun to do previous to this time, a zealous advocate of the peculiar doctrines of the Genevese Reformer, visited Trevecca, and propagated the seeds of dissension and debate, with the peculiarities of Calvin, amongst the students. From this time, the balance of opinion on subordinate points was broken, and the views which Mr. Benson has expressed in a tract on the “Baptism of the Holy Ghost,” were taken to pieces. Her Ladyship, also, beginning to attach more importance to the doctrines of election and predestination, and to censure as heretical the doctrines held by Mr. Fletcher, Mr. Benson, and Mr. Wesley, at length determined to exclude from her college all anti-predestinarians. The following is an exact copy of all that is material in a letter which Mr. Fletcher wrote to Mr. Benson, in consequence of his dismissal from the office he had sustained there.

January 7, 1771.

“Dear Sir,

“The same post brought me yours, and two from my Lady, and one from Mr. Williams, [a clergyman, who, professing to be under

* Life of Fletcher.

serious impressions, had been permitted by her Ladyship to stay a few weeks at the College; but was neither master nor student, and termed by Mr. Fletcher, 'a bird of passage.'] Their letters contained no charges but general ones, which with me go for nothing. If the procedure you mention be fact, and your letter be a fair account of the transactions and words relative to your discharge, a false step has been taken. I write by this post to her Ladyship on the affair with all plainness. If the plan of the College be overthrown, I have nothing more to say to it. I will keep to my tent for one: the tool of any one party I never was, and never will be. If the blow that should have been struck at the *dead spirit*, is struck, contrary to the granted liberty of sentiment, at *dead* Arminius, or absent Mr. Wesley, if a master is turned away without any fault, it is time for me to stand up with firmness, or to withdraw."

But it would not be doing justice, on this subject, to Mr. Benson or Lady Huntingdon, to omit the following caution given by Mr. Fletcher to Mr. Benson: "Take care, my dear Sir, not to make matters worse than they are: and cast the mantle of forgiving love over the circumstances that might injure the cause of God, so far as it is put into the hands of that eminent Lady, who hath so well deserved of the Church of Christ. Rather suffer in silence, than make a noise to cause the Philistines to triumph."

The spirit which dictated this caution, and that which led Mr. Benson to give it publicity in his *Life of Fletcher*, cannot fail to obtain the approbation of every pious and candid reader.

Shortly after, Mr. Fletcher having visited the College, and examined every matter upon the spot, gave Mr. Benson, in a letter bearing date March 22, 1771, the following account:—

"My dear Friend,

"On my arrival at the College, I found all very quiet, I fear through the enemy's keeping his goods in peace. While I preached the next day, I found myself as much shackled as ever I was in my life. And after private prayer, I concluded I was not in my place. The same day, I resigned my office to my Lady, and on Wednesday, to the Students and the Lord. Nevertheless I went on as usual, only had no heart to give little charges to the Students as before. I should possibly have got over it as a temptation, if several circumstances had not confirmed me in my design. Two I shall mention, because they are worth a thousand. When Mr. Shirley was at the College, what you had written upon the 'Baptism of the Holy Ghost,' was taken to pieces. Mr. Shirley maintained that the prophecy of Joel, (Acts ii.) had its complete accomplishment on the day of Pentecost, and thus he turned

the streams of living waters into imperceptible dews, *nemine contradicente*, except two, who made one or two feeble objections: so that the point was, in my judgment, turned out of the College after you, and abused under the name of 'Perfection.' This showed I was not likely to receive or do any good there.

"Some days after my arrival, however, I preached the good old doctrine before my Lady and Mr. H——. The latter talked also of imperceptible influences, and the former thanked me; but, in my apprehension, spoiled all by going to the College the next day, to give a charge, partly against *Perfection*, in my absence.

"In the mean time Mr. Shirley has sent my Lady a copy of the doctrinal part of the Minutes of the last Conference, (*viz.* of the year 1770.) They were called *horrible, abominable, and subversive* articuli, stantis vel cadentis ecclesiæ. My Lady told me 'she must *burn* against them; and that whoever did not fully disavow them should quit the College.' Accordingly an order came for the master, a very insufficient person, and the students, to write their sentiments upon them without reserve. I also did so: explained them according to Mr. Wesley's sentiments; and approved the doctrine, blaming only the unguarded, and not sufficiently explicit manner in which it was worded. I concluded by observing, that as after such a step on my part, and such a declaration on her Ladyship's, I could no longer, as an honest man, stay in the College, I took my leave of it; wishing my Lady might find a minister to preside over it less insufficient, and more willing to go certain lengths into what appeared to me party spirit than I am.

"To be short, I pleaded my cause with my Lady, who seemed at last sensible of the force of my reasons. I advised her, as her College was Calvinistic, to get a Calvinist President for it, and recommended Mr. R. H——. My Lady was so far prevailed upon by my stand for Mr. Wesley, as to design to write him a civil letter, to demand an explanation of the obnoxious propositions of the Minutes, and seemed rather for peace than war, and friendship *eminus*, than battle *cominus*. Last Friday I left them all in peace, the *servant*, but no more the *President*, of the College. My Lady behaved with great candour and condescension towards me in the affair. As for you, you are still out of her books, and are likely so to continue. Your last letters have only thrown oil upon the fire: all was seen in the same light in which Mr. Wesley's letter appeared. You were accused of having alienated my heart from the College, but I have cleared you.

"I rejoice that your desires after a larger measure of the Holy Spirit increase. Part rather with your heart's blood than with them. Let me meet you at the throne of grace, and send me word how you dispose of yourself. If you are at a loss for a Prophet's room, remember I have one here. "J. F."

Before we dismiss the subject of Mr. Benson's removal from Lady Huntingdon's College at Trevecca, it may not be improper to make a few observations on the plan of that Seminary. To admit orthodox students into it, whether Calvinists or Arminians, manifested a truly Catholic spirit: and, had none of those students been permitted to preach during the course of their education, they might have lived together in love and harmony. Nor, in that case, would Mr. Benson's able, judicious, and truly evangelical discourses, have failed to promote their edification. Indeed, his ardent soul was too much engaged in preaching the essential truths of Christianity, to permit him to lay out his strength in opposing opinions, which, though by him conceived to be erroneous, were compatible with eminent holiness. He was aware that Lady Huntingdon, justly famed for piety and Christian zeal, was a Calvinist; and the prudence he possessed would have led him, in his sermons, to lose sight of the opinions to which her Ladyship was opposed. But when young men, under his tuition, who were much his inferiors in point of learning, knowledge of Divinity, and candour, gave prominence in their sermons to some of Calvin's peculiarities; his discourses and theirs to the same congregations, would necessarily be productive of such doubtful disputations, as would, in a great degree, prevent both from producing salutary effects. On this account, if on no other, Lady Huntingdon may be justified, in not permitting any to remain in her Seminary who did not embrace the doctrine of Particular Redemption.

About the time Mr. Benson left Trevecca, several providences, far from pleasing at the time, but in the result equally pleasing and profitable, conspired toward his becoming an itinerant Preacher in the Wesleyan-Methodist Connexion. He had the comfort, however, to receive from Lady Huntingdon, on quitting her College, the following certificate, equally creditable to both the parties, and which we have copied from her Ladyship's hand-writing.

"This is to certify, that Mr. Joseph Benson was Master for the Languages in my College at Falgarth for nine months, and that during that time, from his capacity, sobriety, and diligence, he acquitted himself properly in that character; and I am ready at any time to testify this on his behalf, whenever required.

S. HUNTINGDON."

"College, Jan. 17, 1771.

Mr. Benson had entered his name in the books of the University of Oxford, on March 15, 1769, and observes in his Journal, that he "believed his doing so was in conformity with the Divine will." From that time, he regularly kept his terms at St. Edmund Hall, and was, according to the testimony of a living clergymen of the Church of England,

who was his cotemporary and friend at that seat of learning, "conscientiously attentive to the studies and obligations of his situation." By diligent study, he increased his acquaintance with the Classics and Metaphysics, and he attended Lectures on all the branches of Natural Philosophy. There are documents yet remaining, demonstrative of the diligence with which he cultivated every part of a University education.

On the 10th of June he read with deep attention, Dr. Doddridge's description of the Christian temper; and complained, to use his own words, that he "came short of it in many respects." He then adds, "O my God, I am not a shining image of my Redeemer. Humble me, that after so long a profession I have brought forth so little fruit. I am indeed ashamed before thee; I claim pardon through Jesus; and glory for ever be ascribed to thee, thou dost pardon and give me access to thyself!"

According to Dr. Doddridge's directions, he set apart a day for solemn devotion, and for the purpose of dedicating himself to God. This he did in the following words:—

"Eternal and ever-blessed God! I desire to present myself before thee with the deepest humiliation and abasement of soul, sensible how unworthy such a sinful worm is, to appear before the holy Majesty of heaven, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords; and especially on such an occasion as this, even to enter into a covenant transaction with thee. But the scheme and plan are thine. Thy infinite condescension hath offered it by thy Son, and thy grace hath inclined my heart to accept of it."

"I come, therefore, acknowledging myself to have been a great offender; smiting on my breast, and saying, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!' I come invited by thy Son, and wholly trust in his merits for acceptance; entreating, that for his sake, thou wilt be merciful to my unrighteousness, and wilt no more remember my sins. Receive, I beseech thee, thy revolted creature, who is convinced of thy right to him, and desires nothing so much as that he may be wholly thine!

"This day I do with all solemnity again surrender myself to thee, as thy grace hath often inclined me to do in times past, though my rebellious heart hath frequently turned aside from following thee, and wandered after vanity. I would now again renounce all former lords, that have had dominion over me, and consecrate to thee all I have and all that I am; the faculties of my mind and all the knowledge thou hast enabled me to attain by the use of those faculties; the members of my body, my worldly income and possessions of whatever kind, my time and my influence over others; to be all used entirely to thy glory, and resolutely employed in obedience to thy commands, as long as thou continuest me in life: with an ardent and humble resolution to continue thine, through all the endless ages of eternity."

“To thy direction also I resign myself, and all I am and have, to be disposed of by thee in such a manner as thou shalt in infinite wisdom judge most subservient to thy glory. To thee I leave the management of all events, and say, without reserve, ‘Not my will, but thine be done!’”

“While I live, may I live only to be used as an instrument to promote thy glory. O let me be employed in thy service. Lord, make me useful; and keep me continually sensible that my usefulness depends entirely upon thyself. Convinced of my own weakness and insufficiency for the work thou hast called me to, I would look to thee for a supply of every deficiency; for gifts and grace, that I may in my present capacity be useful to thy servants over whom thou hast placed me, and so to thy church and people. For this purpose, by long experience, I find I am insufficient of myself, and also in any measure to do thy will without thy continual assistance, and therefore humbly declare I rely and trust therein, beseeching thee to wash me in the blood of my Saviour, sanctify me by his Spirit, transform me more and more into his image, and let my life be spent under the influence of his grace, and in the light of thy countenance as my Father and my God.”

“Number me among thy peculiar people, and when the solemn hour of death comes, may I remember this thy covenant, well ordered in all things and sure, as my salvation and all my desire, though every hope and enjoyment is perishing. And do thou, O Lord, remember it too. Look down with pity, O my heavenly Father, on thy languishing, dying child! Embrace me in thine everlasting arms. Put strength and confidence into my departing spirit, and receive it into the abodes of them that sleep in Jesus, peacefully and joyfully to wait the accomplishment of thy great promise to all thy people, even that of a glorious resurrection, and of eternal happiness in thy heavenly presence. And if any surviving friend should, when I am in the dust, meet with this memorial of my solemn transactions with thee, may he make the engagements his own! and do thou graciously admit him to partake of all the blessings of thy covenant through the great Mediator of it; to whom with thee, O Father, and thy Holy Spirit, be everlasting praises ascribed by all the millions who are thus saved by thee, and all those other celestial spirits in whose work and blessedness thou hast called them to share! Amen!”

“JOSEPH BENSON,

“Oxford,

“Aged 22, last January 25, O. S.”

June 17th, 1770.”

Mr. Benson purposed to have continued at Oxford until he should graduate in the usual manner, but was discouraged by the opposition of his Tutor, to whom it appears his open and frank disposition led him to confess his connection with Lady Huntingdon and Mr. Wesley, together with some of the irregularities which those connections occasioned. To

these he adverts in a passage of his journal, written many years afterwards when at Oxford on a visit, (Feb. 22d, 1818.) He then took a view of his old rooms at St. Edmund Hall, and those walks belonging to Magdalene College, in which he had spent many hours in 1769 and 1770 in weeping and praying, that the Lord would fill him with his Spirit, and make him useful in his generation. "At those times," says he, "and also in the year 1768, when classical Master at Kingswood School, it was my custom to keep meetings among the colliers, and to exhort them; and pray with them; and also in the year 1770, when Tutor in Lady Huntingdon's college at Trevecca, I was wont to go out into the villages to preach on the Sundays to the poor ignorant inhabitants." Mr. Benson proceeds to mention, that on these accounts, his tutor informed him that he never would sign his testimonials for orders. It appears that the Principal of the Hall (the uncle of the Tutor) was far from thinking that there was sufficient cause for Mr. Benson's removal, and used all his influence to persuade the Tutor to adopt a more equitable determination. A paper now before us, in Mr. Benson's hand-writing, and evidently drawn up as a statement of his case a short time previous to his quitting Oxford, though it is not dated, will cast much light upon that subject. With the exception of a single sentence omitted, which is rather foreign to the point, the following is a copy of that paper:—

"Mr. Benson was admitted member of the University two years ago. Since that time he has resided partly at the University, and partly in the country: *viz.* at Kingswood school and Lady Huntingdon's College. He has occasionally, when in the country, exhorted and prayed with a company of people, assembled for that purpose in the neighbourhood. This was always at an hour which did not interfere with the church service. It could have no tendency, therefore, to draw the people from the church; especially as they were advised constantly to attend it, which they in general did. Neither can it justly be construed, as an endeavour to instil into them particular notions, or opinions of small importance; for the exhortations were only calculated to promote true religion; to persuade to a conduct and temper manifestly good and praiseworthy, and to dissuade from practices confessedly wicked and unbecoming. These exhortations, he declares, he thought it his duty to give. He acted from a principle of conscience; for he had great reason to believe good was done thereby, and did not conceive it contrary to any law, civil or ecclesiastical. On this account, however, Mr. Bowerbank, the Vice-Principal of Edmund Hall, has refused acting any longer in the capacity of a Tutor to Mr. Benson. This he has refused, even supposing Mr. Benson engages for the future to omit every thing of the kind, and to reside wholly at the University; which he is at liberty to do, as he has no longer any connection with Lady Huntingdon or Mr. Wesley. He also declines signing his testimonials for Orders.

"1. In this case Mr. Benson thinks himself hardly used, if he is deprived of the advantage of an University education, and hindered from entering the ministry in a regular manner, for doing what he judged his duty, and what perhaps cannot be proved contrary to any law, human or divine.

"2. Supposing it to be illegal, the worst that can be supposed; yet as he did not apprehend it such, but acted from a conviction of duty; the most that can be made of it is a mistaken conduct; it can never be proved so bad as flagrant acts of impiety and immorality. He complains of it as unreasonable and unjust, that it should meet with a punishment, seldom, if ever, inflicted upon the perpetrators of such wickedness. Especially when it is considered,

"3. That he has never been warned or admonished to abstain, and has not had liberty granted for an alteration of conduct.

"4. He has spent two years at the University, which must be supposed to have been attended with considerable expense, as well as loss of time, and all to no purpose."

At the time Mr. Benson wrote this paper, the prospect of his passage through life appeared to him exceeding dreary. But on the 1st of January, 1772, on reviewing several events relating to himself, which had occurred in the course of the preceding year, he discovered the Divine wisdom and goodness, even in such of them as he had found to be the most painful.

"Last year," he says, under the above date, "at this time I left Lady Huntingdon's College. It was a scene of great trial and affliction; but I believe God meant thereby to thrust me out into his vineyard. Just about this time I had been more than ordinarily in earnest to possess the accomplishment of the promises of the Gospel respecting the indwelling of the Spirit. I was a fortnight with Mr. Fletcher, which was made a great blessing to me; and I hope I did not preach in vain at Madeley, Chester, or Manchester. I found an uncommon freedom and desire to devote myself entirely to the work of God; and if he designed me to labour amongst the Methodists, could, I thought, cheerfully submit. I expected this might be the case, and found great freedom to pray, that God would dispose of me as should most tend to advance his glory. It did not surprise me, therefore, to find my Tutor at Oxford determine to act no longer towards me in that capacity. I could not help seeing the hand of God in this affair, and I truly believed it his will that I should leave the University."

In reference to the causes which led to Mr. Benson's removal from Oxford, the author deems it right to observe, that as all who enter our Universities are bound to conform to its laws or statutes, one of which is, that previous to their being ordained, they shall not act as public teachers of religion; intelligent readers will not be surprised, that Mr. Benson,

whose holy zeal led him to preach frequently, while keeping his terms at College, was refused his testimonials for ordination. We grant, that several immoral characters, contrary to the laws and statutes of the Universities, too often, to the discredit of religion, obtain such testimonials; but this does not prove, that students at College, may, in opposition to a law or statute, preach with impunity previously to their being ordained. Every corporate Body has laws essential to its existence, the violation of which in *theory* (and why not in *practice*?) deprives any of its members of the advantages accruing from it which they would otherwise possess.

Though Mr. Benson at that time relinquished his design of undertaking the cure of souls, as a minister of the Church of England, in consequence of losing the favour of his Tutor at Oxford, yet, some time afterwards, he obtained testimonials from respectable beneficed Clergymen in Wales. Rowley, a large and populous parish, with a large Church, four miles from West Bromwich, was procured for him as a title, by one of his clerical friends. His testimonials were presented to the Bishop of Worcester, in whose diocese Rowley was situated, having been first countersigned by the Bishop of St. David's. The Bishop of Worcester, however, refused to ordain him, even without permitting him to be examined, assigning, as his reason for so doing, the want of an Academical degree.

These successive disappointments tended to fix Mr. Benson in Mr. Wesley's society; and hence he was enabled to act in a larger sphere of usefulness than he could possibly have done had he become one of the first dignitaries of that church, to which, notwithstanding the treatment he had met with, he was, through life, cordially attached.

On leaving Oxford, Mr. Benson went to visit his friends in and about Bristol, where, he remarks, "I remained six or seven weeks, preaching generally every day, either in those, or the neighbouring parts. The intermediate time was devoted to prayer, conversation, or study."

From April 1771, till the following August, he acted as a preacher in Wiltshire. "I have," says he, "reason to acknowledge the providence of God in sending me here; for he made the word, which he enabled me to preach, a blessing to many."

But amidst his usefulness in Wiltshire, he was often tempted, and that most powerfully, to doubt the truth of Christianity. He, however, continued to pray, and to labour in the Lord's vineyard with increased earnestness; and after his mind had been distressed for a considerable time, by various painful doubts and unprofitable reasonings, he obtained a glorious deliverance. "The Lord," says he, "scattered my doubts, and showed me more clearly the way of salvation by faith in Christ. I was not now anxious to know how I had resolved, and not resolved. I had the Lord with me in all things; my soul rejoiced in his love; and I was continually expecting him to fulfil in me all his good pleasure."

In August, 1771, Mr. Benson was received on trial at the Bristol Methodist Conference, and appointed to labour in the London Circuit. From this time, till he ended a long, laborious, and eminently useful life, we have to consider him in the character of a *Wesleyan Methodist Minister*. That ardent love of souls which led him to warn perishing sinners of their danger, and which, in its effects, was the cause of his removal from College, qualified him for more than ordinary usefulness in the wide field of itinerancy.

Methodism, when he went to the London Circuit, was considered as having made no small progress, though all the members in the Society, including 316 in America, amounted to no more than 31,340; a number which Mr. Benson lived to see increased to 500,000.

Of his labours in the London Circuit, during that year, little remains upon record. But it appears from the Minutes of Conference that, though he laboured in conjunction with the two Wesley's, and Messrs. Mather, Allen, and Helton, the Society increased but little in number. This fact is not adduced as the least reflection upon either him or any of the excellent men, who took their respective parts in the work, in conjunction with him; but a refutation of the vulgar error, that piety, talents, and zeal, when found in ministers, will always ensure great success to their labours. The uncommon talents and zeal of the two Wesleys, none who have any knowledge of their history, will dispute. Mr. Mather, in point of natural and acquired abilities, zeal, devotedness to God, and faithfulness in the work of the ministry, was no ordinary man. Mr. Allen was a man of sense and piety, in addition to his possessing such talents for the pulpit, as recommended to him the best Circuits in England. Mr. Helton was a person of piety, correct taste, and general knowledge; and Mr. Benson was a man to whose piety, zeal and abilities both natural and acquired, all who knew him, and were capable of estimating his worth, bore unequivocal testimony.

It should never be forgotten, that men, in a state of trial for eternity, possess moral power, and hence may, ordinarily, during the time of their gracious visitation accept or reject proffered mercy. For this power they are indebted to Christ Jesus, the second Adam, who is "the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Without this light, it appears inconceivable how any man upon earth could be a probationer. If men, therefore, during their day of grace, possess the power in question, and can choose either life or death, it follows, that whatever talents Ministers of Christ may possess, and whatever may be their piety, zeal, and faithfulness, it is possible for many to sit under their ministry through life without being savingly converted to God. The Great Head of the Church, who possessed the Spirit without measure, and who stamped perfection on all he said and did, preached the

Gospel in vain to the generality of his auditors. His was, indeed, a little flock.

These observations may have a tendency to soften the censure of such ignorant and censorious professors, as are accustomed to reproach the most faithful Ministers of Christ, when little fruit of their labour appears in the conversion of sinners. Too often have many of those Ministers to lament, with respect to numbers whom they address from the pulpit, that they labour in vain, and spend their strength for nought; but they have the consolation of knowing, that however low they may stand in the estimation of those professors, who, instead of judging themselves, judge and condemn their Ministers, their judgment is with the Lord, and their work with their God.

From a letter now before us, written by a gentleman who was at the University of Oxford, during Mr. Benson's residence there, and who is still living, and a respectable Minister of the Established Church, we give a few extracts, chiefly on account of the good sense and liberality of sentiment they contain. That letter, though not dated, evidently appears from its being directed to Mr. Benson, at Moorfields, London, to have been written in the year 1771, or the year following. The familiarity with which that gentleman addressed him, together with the observations he made on the subject of his differing from him on some points of minor importance, shows that he knew him well, and understood how to estimate his character.

“Believe me,” says he, “my dear Benson, if epistolary marks of friendship have been wanting, I am persuaded that those important ones have not, nor ever shall be, which more immediately denominate real friends and true Christians. It is certain our sentiments, in some particulars, do not perfectly coincide. But what? when we perceive the grand characteristics of human nature in any of our species, are we to refuse them the good offices of humanity, because the features and lineaments of their faces do not exactly agree? Who starts not at such a horrid supposition? Yet equally absurd is it to withhold our hearty love, our cordial regard, and most fervent affection, where we see the grand characteristics of a Christian. This, therefore, need be no bar to the warmest reciprocal friendship. About appendages and mere accessory points H—— and Benson will never quarrel. With regard to these we are agreed to disagree, to bear and forbear, to give and take. Bigotry and persecution, in any measure or shape whatever, I can, of all things, the most hardly bear with. And though I would not be like those formerly of the moderate order, who contended for moderation with a spirit that gave the lie to, and contradicted their profession; yet I cannot help looking upon the furious spirit of cruel animosity and bitter contention, which at present predominates, and has long predominated, among those

we have reason more emphatically to style the Christian world, with the greatest concern. This I know, I have proclaimed eternal variance with such a spirit, so far as a man of universal moderation may advance; and I am determined ever resolutely to set myself against it, as the bane of true religion, the pest of Christian friendship and love; a fell and inveterate foe to the civil and religious rights of mankind in general, and an enemy, in particular, to the prosperity, peace, harmony, and mutual comfort of real Christians of all denominations. I am firmly persuaded, that the more we are acquainted with men and things; the more knowledge we have of human nature in its various workings, concernments, &c.; the more we attend to these, in our own breasts, in particular, and, above all, the more the love of God in Christ Jesus is shed abroad, felt, experienced and enjoyed; the more will our Christian benevolence exceed the narrow and confined limits which presumptive ignorance, and irrational, as well as unchristian, bigotry would prescribe and terminate it by.

“ I need not suggest to you how this candour and forbearance expose me to the jealousies and suspicions of some friends of my own sentiments more immediately, and what reflections others make upon me for the exercise of them. You and I, my dear Benson, have long done with the world, as Mr. Whitefield, of blessed memory, used to say. It is the church, as he further used to add, we have now to overcome, and get above. And these are some of the trials and conflicts in which the victory is to be obtained. I bless my God, it is to me a small thing to be judged of man’s judgment. I have long been convinced, and I am so more and more every day, in my understanding at least, that it is the blessed privilege of Christians, to live above, and detached from men and things, of all sorts and kinds whatever, in this point of view. I think too, I sometimes enjoy something of this frame of spirit, and obtain a happy and holy triumph of this nature. It is a lesson I am daily endeavouring to learn, and get particularly master of; as preparatory to a situation, wherein I see, from what little attention I have paid to mankind already, that the best of men, the most excellent of the earth, in every respect, must be the constant objects of innumerable, undeserved hard speeches, and unmerited censorious reflections, not more from the men of the world perhaps, than from those we have reason to think real Christians; which are much the hardest to be borne. You will not understand me here as favouring at all, the insensible and unfeeling stoic, the monkish ascetic, or the secluded misanthrope. No; neither of us would insinuate any thing, in the least, contrary to that eternal reason, or the nature and fitness of things we hear so much about; ‘ the nature of God, and the nature of man, with the relations necessarily subsisting between them.’ But, surely, there is a philosophy in religion. There

is a conquest of persons and things, a living above both, in Christianity. There is, even in the ways of God, nay, I will add, we alone find there, that *nil admirari, nil timere, nil cupere*, (the real difference from every thing human,) which is the best wisdom and truest philosophy."

About this time, the Rev. Dr. Dixon, Principal of St. Edmund Hall, Oxford, wrote a letter to Mr. Benson, from which we transcribe the following paragraph:—

"When I first read your favour of the 18th, I must own I much suspected that your friendship for Mr. Fletcher had made you somewhat too lavish in your commendation of his performance, and that when I came to peruse it, I should find some abatements necessary to be made. But the truth is, now I have read his Letters, I am far from thinking any thing you have said too extravagant, or indeed, that too much can well be said in the praise of them. I assure you, dear Sir, that I had not read his first Letter quite through, before I was so charmed with the spirit, as well as abilities of the writer, that the gushing tear could not be suppressed from giving full testimony to a heartfelt satisfaction and pleasure imparted in the reading of it. Perhaps some part of this pleasure might possibly arise from finding my own sentiments on the points treated of, so fully embraced by the author. But sure I am, the greatest share of it arose from finding the benevolent doctrines he contends for so firmly established; and that with such clearness, precision, and judgment, as is seldom, very seldom to be met with: and what crowns the whole, with a temper and spirit, at the same time so amiable and Christian-like, that those who cannot answer, and yet do not choose to be convinced, or yield to his arguments, must at least approve of the spirit manifested in them, and wish that their own doctrines may be constantly attended by the same spirit, wherever, or by whomsoever embraced."

Such able and pious correspondents as the two from whom we have now quoted, must have afforded Mr. Benson much pleasure and edification. When men of good sense, learning, and piety, converse, or even correspond with each other, they enjoy a "feast of reason and a flow of soul" of which the mass of mankind have no conception. Their society with each other greatly resembles that of the holy angels, and "the spirits of just men made perfect."

Dr. Dixon's opinion on the subject of Mr. Benson's becoming an itinerant preacher, may be collected from the following extract of a letter, bearing date January 11, 1772. "If you are clearly convinced in your own mind, that you can best show your love to your blessed Saviour, bring most glory to God, and do most good to man, by going out into the highways and hedges to call sinners to repentance; I shall be far from being the first to condemn you for, or dissuade you from se

charitable an employment : and great pleasure would it give me to hear that you meet with success in it, in some degree proportionate to such singular zeal to promote the glory of God, and the salvation of souls."

Such encouragement, and from such a man as Dr. Dixon, who knew him so well during his stay at Oxford, must have been highly encouraging to Mr. Benson at so early a stage of his itinerant labours.

At the Conference held at Leeds, in August, 1772, Mr. Benson, after having laboured a year in the London Circuit, was admitted into full connexion, and appointed to the Newcastle Circuit. In the month of September, he charges himself with a want of humility and devotedness to God.—"O how many precious opportunities have I neglected to improve, of getting and communicating good ! How much more advanced in grace might I have been, and how many souls are still living in sin, which might have been converted by my instrumentality, had I been more diligent, and especially more humble and devout !"

In the same month, he says, "I see that the praise of men is an empty bubble, and the honour of God only desirable. Those that honour him, he has promised to honour. If honour be the thing at which we aim, the sure and only way to obtain it is to honour God."

On January 1, 1773, being at Newcastle, he, with many others, renewed his covenant with God. "My mind," says he, "was much oppressed with a sense of my unprofitableness, both as a Christian and a minister of the ever-blessed Gospel. I have not steadily aimed at God's glory, nor been wholly obedient and resigned to his will. But I have a strong desire to devote myself entirely to his service."

The Conference which was held this year in London, appointed Mr. Benson to labour in the Edinburgh Circuit. To that station he, at first, felt rather opposed : but, he observes, "By the grace of God, I will for the future give up my own will whenever the will of God seems to appoint. I may be happy any where with resignation, but without it I can be happy no where."

Towards the latter end of September, he says, "The last year I was in the Newcastle Circuit, where I had much employment. From August till December I was principally at Alnwick and in the neighbourhood. In those parts I had many blessed seasons among the people : the congregations were numerous ; and the Lord often favoured me with peculiar enlargement of heart while I addressed them. Afterwards I was at Newcastle, Sunderland, and the places adjacent. Our congregations, especially on Sundays, were very large ; and the power of God was often exerted in awakening sinners, in comforting mourners, and strengthening the faith of such as had believed."

The London, Newcastle, and Edinburgh Circuits, in which Mr. Benson laboured successively during the three first years of his itinerancy, were highly favourable to his making a rapid progress in knowledge.

In those Circuits he had many opportunities of preaching to such well-informed hearers, as, at that early state of Methodism, could not be found in other parts of the kingdom. A preacher's knowing that he has frequently to address persons of general knowledge and good taste, will prove to him a powerful stimulus to mental exertion. Uninformed Christians would be edified by discourses from which hearers of equal piety, but cultivated minds, would derive little or no profit; hence the necessity of ministers' so giving themselves up to reading and study, that "their profiting may appear" to the most intelligent of their auditors. They are equally debtors to the wise and the unwise; and have the consolation of knowing, that if they preach so as to please the former, for their good to edification, they cannot fail to be of essential service to the latter. For though the wise justly expect that they, under whose ministry they sit, should not only preach sound doctrine, but do it in language tolerably correct; they distinguish betwixt the flourish and bombast, which, with too many, pass for eloquence, and that purity and simplicity of style which, while they delight the best judges, can be understood by the great mass of the people, who are in the habit of attending public worship. Such was the style of WESLEY, and such was that of BENSON. It has been justly observed, that it is a bad book which needs an interpreter; and we may add, with equal truth, that a sermon which cannot be understood by the generality of a popular audience, merits a similar censure.

We transcribe from Mr. Benson's Journal the following passage.

"October 4. I have just read over again Mr. Wesley's Answer to Church. I esteem those letters more than ever, and my soul is more knit to the author. How concise, and yet how full is his answer! How short, and yet how convincing his arguments! How elegant, and yet how simple his style! How keen, and yet gentle his expressions! In what a clear and scriptural manner does he speak of the main doctrines of the Gospel, viz. repentance, faith, and holiness! And how manifestly does he establish his account of them beyond contradiction!"

About the middle of October, he expressed a fear, that on account of his having to preach so seldom, he was not suitably appointed. Through every part of his Christian and ministerial course, he possessed that love which led him to be

"To others kind, but to himself severe."

In a journal of more than 4000 pages, closely written, there does not occur one expression manifesting that he gloried in himself. It abounds with the language of self-abasement.

On October 12, he says, "Alas! I fear I am not in my place. So little preaching, and so much study and retirement, are very pleasing to flesh and blood, and quite agreeable to my natural disposition. I find I

could sit down here, and be very comfortable, at least as far as outward things could make me so. But then, where is the daily cross? Where is self-denial? Where is obedience to the command, 'Be instant in season, and out of season?' "

On the 2d of January, 1774, Mr. Benson says, "I have spent nine weeks in Edinburgh, in general much to my satisfaction, and I hope to the profit of others. The Lord frequently opened my mouth, and enabled me to speak plainly and convincingly concerning the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel. The power of God often attended his word, especially on Sunday evenings, when our congregations were very large. I have reason to think that some were awakened, some justified, and others built up in their most holy faith. And yet, upon reflection, I am quite ashamed of myself and labours. I see I might have been more devoted to God myself, and far more useful to others."

August 15, he devoted chiefly to the important duties of visiting the sick, and conversing upon religious subjects. Living, as he did, under divine influence, and having his naturally strong and intelligent mind well improved by various reading and study, his conversation was highly instructive. He maintained the sober dignity of character becoming a minister of Christ, and possessed that self-command which is essential to clearness, ease, and propriety in conversation; and hence was generally listened to with equal pleasure and profit. But while his conversation excited the esteem and admiration of those with whom he associated, he was so far from admiring himself, that his language was, "I have been much impressed with a sense of my ignorance, sin, and misery, my unfaithfulness and unfruitfulness."

The admirable but well deserved character which he gives of the Rev. George Whitefield, proves that he knew how to estimate moral and religious worth, as well in the maintainers of Particular Redemption, as in those who embrace the opposite doctrine. But let us hear himself upon this interesting subject.

"I have just finished the Memoirs of Mr. Whitefield's Life, by Mr. Gillies. What a man! surely the world has not seen his equal for popularity and usefulness as a Preacher. I am fully persuaded, with the pious author, that his popularity arose wholly from his usefulness. The Divine power accompanying the word, attracted hearers, in spite of all the secret insinuations and public clamour, excited by the devil and wicked men, to the disadvantage and reproach of himself and doctrines. His humility, amidst so much honour and success; his fortitude, amidst so much obloquy and sufferings; his diligence, amidst such weakness and affliction; his perseverance and constancy in prosecuting his purpose, for the glory of God and good of souls, notwithstanding the apparently insurmountable obstacles and discouragements which lay in the way, quite astonish me. His inward piety and outward labours, are

almost incredible, and that for the space of forty years. But, what above all strikes me in his character, and what I wish especially to imitate, is his perfect superiority to the censures and praises of men; his going steadily forward through evil and good report, only intent upon the pleasing of him, whom he served in the Gospel of his Son."

It is common with many pious persons, who are not sufficiently well instructed, to confound the whole, or at least the principal part, of inward religion with spiritual joy; and hence, in speaking of what God has done for their souls, they generally confine themselves to the degree of happiness or misery they feel; not considering that long-suffering, meekness, and gentleness, are equally parts of the fruit of the Spirit with love, joy, and peace. The grand business of Christians is, to press after holiness, inward and outward conformity to the divine will; leaving it to their heavenly Father to grant them such a portion of joy as shall, taking eternity into the account, be most for their advantage. For purposes worthy of infinite wisdom, they are occasionally brought into heaviness through manifold temptations; but they are not less acceptable to God when most severely exercised, than when their joy most abounds, and is least accompanied with sorrow. That such reflections as these were familiar to Mr. Benson, appears from the following passage in his Journal.

"Nov. 1. This day, as well as yesterday, I was fully employed in reading, writing, visiting the sick, and the public exercises of religion. I was kept all the day in sweet peace of mind, but had not much joy, nor did I find such nearness to God as I did some days past. However, it is still my resolution to make his will my rule, and his favour my portion; and I doubt not he will give me all the comfort he sees necessary."

On November 6, he received the Lord's-Supper at the English Chapel, and, to use "his own words, "was refreshed and comforted by that ordinance. Never before," he observes, "was I so sensible of the incomparable service of the Church of England. I prefer it vastly to all other forms."

The idle and ignorant remarks often made upon sermons by very incompetent judges, are frequently contradictory and absurd. One of the accidental evils consequent on the Reformation, is the little deference which the generality of Protestants pay to the judgment of their pastors, together with their defect of reverence for the sacred office. In avoiding the implicit confidence placed in the decisions of their clergy by the Roman Catholics in general, they are, however unqualified for the purpose, in the habit of magisterially deciding, not only on the doctrines which their ministers inculcate, but upon their talents, manner, and delivery. From the censure of those who come under the word to judge, not to learn, no man, however qualified for preaching the Gospel, wholly

escapes. With them, one preacher has good matter, but his manner is shocking, and this prevents his sound divinity and manly sense from producing a good effect. The manner of another is excellent, but there is no depth in his discourses. This minister so hurries from the beginning to the conclusion of his sermon, as not to allow his hearers time to understand what he delivers. But this rapidity, which is unquestionably a great fault, is not without its advocates, who maintain, that those who preach in the most rapid manner, possess such abundance of ideas, that they occur much faster than they can be deliberately expressed. Those contenders for rapidity, censure deliberate preaching, as calculated to produce spiritual deadness, nay, to lull an audience to sleep. In short, with those judges, extremely few of whom are so well acquainted with their mother tongue, as to be able to speak it correctly; some preachers are too dull, and others too lively; the style of some is too plain, and that of others too ornamented; one is an orator, and another not worth hearing; one is a gentleman and a scholar; and another fit only to address such as neither read nor think, but not capable of entertaining persons of sense or taste.

These are a few specimens of the criticisms of many Protestants, upon the public discourses of those men to whom the Great Head of the Church, hath committed the word of reconciliation; those men, whom, whatever may be their defects, the God of all grace makes the honoured instruments of so preaching the Gospel, that it becomes effectual in turning sinners from darkness to light, and in promoting the spiritual improvement of such as have believed. Mr. Benson, under date Nov. 20, gives us an instance of a rash and ignorant decision upon the talents and manner of a Minister. "I heard, this day, a very good and useful discourse from Dr. Wishart. How very little one should regard popular rumour! I expected, from report, to have found him a very dry preacher; but was surprised by finding him quite the contrary."

This judgment of such a man as Mr. Benson, would weigh more with those who knew how to appreciate his mental and religious worth, than the censure of thousands, who assume the office of critics, without the requisite qualifications.

In this part of the work, some extracts of letters received by Mr. Benson from respectable correspondents, in the course of the few preceding years, may, we trust, be inserted to advantage.

It does not appear that Mr. Benson, by becoming an itinerant Minister in the Methodist Connexion, lost, in any degree, the esteem or affection of Dr. Dixon. In May, 1773, that learned and good man wrote a letter to him, of which the following is an extract.

"I have got all Mr. Fletcher's Checks to Antinomianism, together with his Appeal to Common Sense, and look upon him as an able and

excellent writer: and shall with great pleasure purchase any thing he shall hereafter think fit to publish. But how far a continuance of these unhappy disputes" (those then going forward on the Five Points) "amongst professors of Christianity, and such as, I trust, are equally zealous to promote the glory of God, and the good of mankind, may be attended with consequences favourable to the cause of religion or otherwise, is hard to say; though I am afraid there is too great reason to believe, that the advantage is rather on the wrong side; more especially, as the hearts of such as are deeply engaged in religious controversy, generally speaking, suffer greater moral injury than their heads gain useful knowledge.

"Of late, but few persons have had courage enough to enter themselves of Edmund Hall: and, indeed, such has been the general treatment it hath met with, that there is little reason to expect any will hereafter much care to enter in it, but such as are above minding what countenance they may meet with in this world, so they may but secure an interest in the next.—Your affectionate friend, &c.

"GEORGE DIXON."

"St. Edmund Hall,
May 19, 1773.

The late Lady Maxwell, one of the very excellent of the earth, held a distinguished place amongst Mr. Benson's friends and correspondents. Her good sense and eminent piety will be discovered by the devout and intelligent reader, while perusing the following extracts of two letters written by her to Mr. Benson.

"Edinburgh, Feb. 10, 1774.

"REV. SIR,

"I am glad to see by your letter that you are still on stretch for God. Permit me to say, Do not give up, on any account, a constant and lively expectation of every blessing Christ has purchased for you. A want of this expectation often, as it were, cuts the sinews of our endeavours, and then we sink into a supineness of spirit, which neither brings glory to God nor comfort to our own souls. What greater encouragement to press on through every difficulty can we have, than the promises of a faithful God? Those promises are more stable than the pillars of heaven, or the laws of nature; the former may be shaken, the latter reversed; but to persevering faith it is impossible that any promise which God hath made should fail of its accomplishment. Ought not a consideration of this to fire our souls with a holy ambition of gaining all that conformity to the Divine will which humanity will permit! What a distinguished privilege is it, to have the whole image of God stamped upon the soul! For the possession of this precious jewel, what pleasure

can be too great to forego ! What suffering too keen to endure ! Surely did we form a just estimate of things, and weigh all in the balance of God, we should see this as the only object worthy of esteem, and continually pursue it with the whole ardour of our soul. But, alas ! how often are we in danger of growing remiss herein ! of having our attention called off, at least for a time, by trifles, or at best some fancied good ! Against this great, but too common evil, we must continually watch, if we wish to enjoy constant peace in the ways of God, or make a progress in holiness.

“ I will not say it is a misfortune to have fine feelings, but undoubtedly they subject the possessors to many painful sensations they would otherwise be free from. Such must have their delicacy daily and hourly shocked by all around them. But this is a cross which they must take up, and firmly sustain, for Christ’s sake, if they would be entirely devoted to God, and extensively useful. There is a remedy which some, who are unhappily cast in this mould, have found beneficial, viz. drawing back from the creature, and sinking into God ; in other words, a being disunited in heart and life from created things.

“ Remember, the greatest proof you can give of your own strength is, bearing with the weakness of others. Allow me also to say, whatever we have a strong propensity to by nature, we are in danger of exceeding in. If your great love to retirement, and intense application to study, interrupt in any degree your communion with God, your constant looking to, and depending on Jesus, or one labour of love, you are a loser both for time and eternity. I believe we are safest, when at that work, in those places, and with those persons least pleasing to nature.

“ I dare not say, that I possess all I wish for, and aim at, in the divine life ; but, through abounding mercy, I maintain a constant sense of my union with Christ ; enjoy a degree of communion with the Father of mercies ; and my heart more and more burns with desire to glorify him in every possible way, but especially in the way of doing good to the souls and bodies of my fellow-creatures. I have, however, much cause to be ashamed before God, that I have proceeded no further in holiness. I am, Rev. Sir,

“ Your friend in Christ,
“ D. MAXWELL.”

The sentiments contained in the above extract prove that Lady Maxwell, in addition to her good sense and taste, lived much under the influence of the Holy Spirit. She possessed a large degree of that faith which overcomes the world, and hence always walked in the fear of God and the comfort of the Holy Ghost.

It would seem, from some part of the following extract of a letter written to Mr. Benson, in April, 1773, that he had felt disappointed in

not hearing oftener from Lady Maxwell. With what true wisdom and Christian dignity does she address him !

“ Rev. Sir,

“ Unless you practically obey the Gospel precept, of judging not by appearance, but right judgment, you will no doubt conclude that I have neglected your last letter, by being so long without answering it ; but that is not the case. The matter of fact is, I am shy of corresponding with any one, and should be more so with those who put any value upon my letters. Human nature is so prone to self-approbation, that it is necessary to shun every occasion of increasing it, if we would be wholly devoted to God. Yet I could not think of being silent, lest you should mistake my motive. Nothing would prevail with me to write to any one, but an ardent desire, that less or more continually burns in my soul, to glorify God ; together with a deep and permanent conviction that he can and often does, give success to the most unlikely means for producing that end.

“ You have great cause to be thankful to the Father of mercies, who has given you a child-like spirit, and made you willing to learn from all. Whatever degree of wisdom any persons possess, they surely make a bad use of it, if they suppose they cannot be taught by any one. What innate beauty is in humility ! What a heaven does it produce in the breast of the happy possessor ! And man, sunk as he is in original depravity, must, and does approve of it, even when he finds he neither has it himself, nor can imitate it. ‘ Learn of me,’ says Jesus, ‘ for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls.’ O how little does the greater number of us know of this divine temper ! or of conformity to our living Head in general ! What mere dwarfs are we in the ways of God, swimming upon the surface of religion, when it is our privilege to sink into all the depths of humble love, and rise into all the life of God, all the heights of Christian confidence. O that He who dwells on high would baptize us all afresh with the Holy Ghost, as with fire ! then surely we would arise and shake ourselves from the dust, and would give no rest to our eyes, nor slumber to our eyelids, till possessed of every blessing Christ has purchased for us. Let us, Jacob-like, wrestle with the Lord in faithful prayer, and we shall soon enjoy all the sweets of entire devotion, as far as humanity will permit. An excellent help to steadiness in this glorious pursuit is, the being abstracted in heart and life from the things of time and sense. Without this, we shall often grow weary, and, of consequence, remiss in duty, and then start aside, allured by the pleasing bait of some fancied good, till a kind providence makes us feel the prickle, in plucking the rose ; and then we find our mistake, and come back to Him who giveth liberally, and

upbraideth none, either with past unfaithfulness or present unfitness. O the depth of Divine love!

“I am glad the work is prospering at Greenock. I wish you more and more success; and I am, Rev. Sir, your obliged humble servant,
“D. MAXWELL.”

Before we resume the narrative of Mr. Benson's life, the following extract of a letter from Mr. Hopper, bearing date June 27, 1774, may with propriety be inserted.

“My very dear Joseph,

“You do me great honour to call me father. The Lord bless thee, my son, and make his face to shine upon thee, and give thee peace for evermore! You have always a share of my warmest affections, and are welcome to my best advice. Trials we must have, and sometimes from every quarter; so let us stand prepared for every event. We are called to do and suffer; may the Lord keep us to the end! We have had a blessed season in Newcastle and the country since Mr. Wesley came. If we are spared to see the Conference at Leeds, perhaps we may spend another year together. But, O! who can tell what revolutions will happen on the stage of this mortal life before that time? Keep your heart with care and diligence, by divine grace, and the God of Jacob will be your God and portion for ever.—Your affectionate brother and disinterested friend,

“C. HOPPER.”

On the 1st of January, 1775, Mr. Benson, as he was in the habit of doing, took a survey of the past year, and in general terms, noticed his ministerial labours, spiritual comforts, and mental exercises. Notwithstanding he had been, through the course of it, the delight and admiration of the intelligent people to whose edification and comfort he had largely contributed, by the holiness of his life, and the excellency of the instructions he gave them both in public and private; yet he spoke of himself in the strongest language of self-abasement. “Upon a review,” says he, “of my temper and conduct the past year, I find I have much cause to be humbled before God, on account of the small progress I have made in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and the little use I have been of in the world. Considering the advantages I have enjoyed, how much holier might I have been! And considering the opportunities with which I have been favoured, how much more good might I have done! In my public exercises, I have not always had that dependence upon God for success, nor that earnest desire for his glory, which I ought to have had. What wonder, then, that I have done so little good! While I praise the Lord for sparing

me another year, I cast myself upon his mercy through Christ for the pardon of what is past; and, trusting that he accepts of me, notwithstanding my great unworthiness, I dedicate myself afresh to him, desiring to live more to his glory, both inwardly and outwardly, than I have ever done. O Lord, accomplish my desire!"

On Jan. 16, after mentioning that he had been recommending universal holiness much of late, he adds, "But, alas! I am still very unholy: for pride, self-well, self-seeking, self-pleasing, and other members of the old man, are not yet crucified."

This language of truth and sobriety, will appear strange from the pen of such a man as Mr. Benson, to merely nominal Christians, who rest satisfied with the form, without the power of godliness; but will be thoroughly understood by every reader of spiritual discernment. It will appear an effect of enthusiasm to such characters as accuse the celebrated Dr. Samuel Johnson, of weakness and superstition, because he could not found his hope of eternal salvation upon the purity of his morals, and the usefulness of his literary productions. Of such censors, it may be said, without the least breach of charity, that they are wholly unacquainted with Scriptural Christianity. To them, the plan of salvation through the merits of Christ, and by a living and operative faith in him, is a complete mystery. They brand the religion of the heart with the odious epithet, *fanaticism*, and consider all who profess to enjoy it, as weak and credulous. Mr. Benson well knew what estimate to set upon the censures of such inadequate judges. Contented to be accounted a fool by characters destitute of true wisdom, he proceeded, with a zeal truly apostolic, to preach Christ crucified. To approve himself to God by personal holiness and ministerial usefulness, was his highest ambition.

On June 24, he tells us, that he was favoured with a sense of God's loving-kindness, and that he was particularly blessed, while considering the trials, afflictions, and persecutions, suffered by the Apostles and primitive Christians. "I think," says he, "if ever I was led to pray for grace to deny myself, take up my cross, renounce my own ease, pleasure, and all the world, it was this morning. O how sweet it seemed to have fellowship with Jesus in his sufferings, and to be made conformable to his death."

These sentiments remind us of the zeal, deadness to the world, and heavenly-mindedness of that eminent Missionary to the Indians, David Brainard.

Did private Christians duly consider the difficulties which the Preachers of the Gospel have to surmount, in order to make full proof of their ministry; they would be more grateful than they generally are for their labours, and pray for them more frequently and fervently. How often do those heralds of free grace consume their health by long-continued

and intense study, that they may be skilful in dividing the word of truth ! How often, when labouring under bodily indisposition, and with minds severely exercised, do they ascend the pulpit ! How frequently are they distressed by the deadness, drowsiness, and stupidity of several who sit under their ministry ! They earnestly desire, to the utmost of their power, to please all men for their good ; and hence are grieved, whenever they even suspect that, through want of sufficient ease in their delivery, connection in their discourses, weakness of argument, or any other cause, their ministrations are rendered unacceptable to the most intelligent of their hearers. These are a few of the difficulties with which the ministers of the Gospel have to contend. But, in the midst of these and other difficulties, the Great Head of the Church is their support and comfort. To him they are grateful for bodily, as well as mental and spiritual strength, to labour in his harvest. These observations are in conformity with the sentiments contained in the following paragraph.

“ June 25. This morning I found myself very weak in body, and apparently unable for the work of the day, having to preach four times. But, glory be to God, he has graciously assisted me both in body and mind, and I have manifestly felt the truth of his promise, ‘ As thy day, so shall thy strength be.’ O how often have I experienced of late the faithfulness of his word ! For eight or ten weeks, I have generally preached four times on each Lord’s-day, and twice of those times, to very large congregations in the open air ; and yet I have found such vigour and strength of body, that, it seemed to me, I was as fit to preach, if not more so, after the labours of the day, as in the morning. O what cause have I to trust in the Lord, and not be weary in well-doing ! ”

After having laboured faithfully in the Edinburgh Circuit for the space of three years, he, on July 24, says, “ My heart is so united to this people, that I find it very hard to leave this place. I never was amongst a more loving and kind people than those in our society at Edinburgh. Many a happy and edifying hour have I spent among them. Many a time has my soul been blessed in answer to their prayers, and in meeting with them both in public and in private. May the Lord continue to favour them with his presence, and reward them for all their kindness to me ! ”

At the London Conference in 1775, he was once more appointed to the Newcastle Circuit, of which then, and for several years after, Sunderland made a part. A more profitable Conference than that, he said he had never attended.

Early in August, he had the happiness of finding himself once more in the midst of his dear friends at Sunderland ; and they received him with such warmth and cordiality, as proved that they knew how to estimate his worth. Toward the conclusion of a funeral sermon, which he preached there on the 4th of August, he was led to speak with uncom-

mon earnestness and affection, and the divine power so attended the word, that, to use his own language, "the whole congregation seemed to melt before the Lord."

Such a remarkable season, as that now mentioned, no minister of Christ, however holy, able, and faithful, can command. God never fails so to conduct himself toward his rational offspring, during the time of their visitation, as to leave them without excuse ; but he, sometimes, so accompanies the preaching of his word by the powerful workings of his Spirit, that the wills of many of the most stubborn sinners are subdued, and the hearts of the most obdurate softened. And, indeed, such is the depravity of human nature, and the proneness of even pious characters, to seek too much of their happiness in created good, that extraordinary revivals of the work of God are, in all probability, necessary in order to prevent the gates of hell from prevailing against the Church of Christ. The Almighty may, at pleasure, so operate upon the minds of any of his ransomed creatures, as to secure their conversion. But admitting this to be the case in many instances, it does not follow that divine grace will, through every stage of their Christian course, continue to work irresistibly ; for the continued operation of irresistible grace is incompatible with a state of trial.

Several ministers of Christ are frequently discouraged, when they discern little or no fruit of their labour. The impropriety of this Mr. Benson saw at an early stage of his itinerancy. "This day," he observes, "I have preached three times, and that with much liberty. But whether any, or much good is done, I leave to God. I have much cause to praise him, that he generally enables me to commit the matter to him, when I have done preaching, so that I do not, as formerly, distress myself with evil and hurtful reasonings."

Previous to our following Mr. Benson, in the course of this narrative, into the year 1776, the following extract of a letter addressed to him by Lady Maxwell, in November, 1775, will no doubt be acceptable to the reader.

"Rev. Sir,

"I received your obliging letter some months ago ; a multiplicity of occurrences has prevented my answering it sooner, together with an almost unconquerable reluctance to writing. I hope the work of the Lord prospers in your hands, and that your own soul is more than ever alive to God, and that you enjoy all in him, and him in all. Nothing short of this can make us truly happy. I believe you are not only convinced of this, but enabled, in a good measure, to contend for the valuable prize. It requires much holy fortitude to fight continually, not only with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers ; and this the soul must do, that would inherit all things.

“What the world calls happiness, is a mere delusion; and any degree of it which a Christian seeks, exclusive of God, will sooner or later prove bitterness; I mean, if the glory of God is not the ultimate end he aims at in his pursuit. In fact, nothing merits the name of happiness, but communion with the Father and the Son, through the Eternal Spirit. The whole world given in exchange for this would be a cheap purchase; what wisdom then to sacrifice every thing which would retard our progress in holiness! Surely, through the power of sovereign grace, we may rise superior to the allurements of sense, and even the refined pleasures of science. Certainly there is enough in God to occupy the greatest genius, to employ the brightest parts, and the most improved understanding. O that all who are favoured with superior abilities would make the experiment. That you may be wise to make the best choice, and be steady in pursuing it, is the desire of,

“Rev. Sir, Your most humble servant,

“D. MAXWELL.”

On January 1, 1776, Mr. Benson was at South Shields. Having entered upon the new year, he, in terms of the warmest gratitude, praised the Lord for past mercies in general, but particularly for the success with which he had crowned his labours. He expressed an earnest desire and fixed purpose to devote himself unreservedly to God. On this occasion, he was much encouraged by reading a treatise written by Mr. Fletcher on Christian Perfection.

After having been abundantly blessed both at and after family prayer, he made the following judicious observations. “I now saw more clearly than ever, that a life of activity for God, of diligence, self-denial, and watchfulness, is vastly preferable to a life of contemplation and enjoyment. It appeared to me a matter of small moment, whether I was favoured with much or little consolation, if I was but entirely devoted to God’s service.”

On Feb. 17, Mr. Benson having noticed some of the opinions of certain authors, who attempt to establish a system of morals either independent of, or in opposition to, divine revelation, says, “In truth, all their systems of morality are equally without foundation, are no more than ‘the baseless fabric of a vision.’ They all proceed upon this false hypothesis, that man is now the holy and happy being he was when he came out of the hands of his Creator; and therefore they err from first to last. Christianity is founded on truth, but their systems on a lie.”

When we consider Mr. Benson’s extraordinary exertions in preaching, in addition to his giving himself up so much to reading and study, and to his paying so many pastoral visits; it appears little less than a miracle that they did not hasten his dissolution. Who that were witnesses of his extraordinary labours during the first years of his ministry, could

imagine that in the best of services he should continue an effective man beyond the ordinary limit of human life ! But instead of sinking under the force of his mighty exertions, he, by their instrumentality, acquired fresh accessions of strength ; so that after performing, what to some would appear impossible, and what in prospect himself dreaded, he found his bodily and mental vigour at their highest pitch. But let us hear himself upon this subject.

“ Newcastle, Feb. 25. Praise the Lord, O my soul ! and all that is within me, praise his holy name ! O how gracious has he been to me this day ! He has strengthened me both in body and mind, far beyond my expectation. Yesterday I laid myself under an obligation to preach four times this day, merely out of a desire to do good ; but at night, finding myself much indisposed, and fearing I should get no rest, my heart was like to faint. However, I found power to cast my care upon the Lord, and he was pleased to give me refreshing sleep, and fit me for the duties of the day. I preached every time with much liberty, but especially in the evening at Newcastle, when I had the least confidence in myself, being quite exhausted in both body and mind, and to all human appearance utterly unable to preach. But the Lord gave me to renew my strength both of body and mind before I had well begun to speak. To him be all the glory !”

The 27th of March Mr. Benson devoted chiefly to meditation and prayer ; and in the performance of these important duties, he experienced much divine consolation. “ I could not,” says he, “ form a wish for any thing on earth, being persuaded I did not know what was best for me ; but with my whole heart I could trust in God, that he would give me whatever he knew would be for my advantage.”

All who enjoyed the privilege of sitting for any length of time under Mr. Benson’s ministry, and who were competent to judge of the worth of his public discourses, discerned that he equally excelled in his knowledge of doctrinal and practical divinity. He was well aware that many who make a profession of piety, injure their own souls, and expose to odium that inward religion they profess, by not having the law of kindness engraven upon their hearts and lips. At an early stage of Methodism, it was objected to its adherents, that though reformed from gross vices, they were as destitute of piety as they ever had been. In proof of this charge it was urged, that having abandoned those sins which none attempt to vindicate, they had adopted others not less opposed to genuine Christianity. The vices of which they were accused of adopting are spiritual pride, evil-speaking, back-biting, and tale-bearing. That these sins, for such they are by whomsoever committed, are prevalent amongst unsound professors, whether Methodists or not, is unquestionable. To any people among whom they are found, they are a reproach in proportion to their prevalence. But that they generally prevail amongst the professors

of vital religion, whether Methodists or others, though frequently asserted, has never been proved. The Rules of the Methodists, in conformity with the precepts of Christianity, prohibit those sins, as directly opposed to the whole genius of the Gospel. Mr. Benson's views of this subject merit the deepest attention.

On the 23d of April, he says, "In the evening I lectured upon James i. 21—27. I endeavoured to recommend that practical religion, which alone will stand us in stead in the day of judgment. In this we are, after all, very deficient, especially in bridling our tongues, from backbiting, tale-bearing, evil-speaking, and trifling conversation."

Mr. Benson, amidst his uncommon ministerial labours, was anxious to retain the knowledge he had acquired of the learned languages. For this purpose, sensible of the worth of the best classical works, he perused them occasionally with pleasure and profit. But though few have ever relished their beauties more, or more admired the sentiments, expressed in the most pure and correct terms, with which they abound, yet to him, when compared with the oracles of God, they appeared as nothing. On the 1st of August, he says, "I have just finished Homer's *Odyssey*, which I have occasionally spent a little time in reading, that I might maintain my acquaintance with the Greek language. It is an ingenious poem, and in many places very entertaining, and even instructive; but I do not think it equal to the *Iliad*. But alas! but what are these boasted remains of antiquity to the sacred reliques of Moses and the Prophets, of Christ and his Apostles! I prefer the Gospel of St. John, or even his short Epistles, to all the learning of Greece and Rome."

Every man of reflection, however pious, discerns in himself a degree of weakness, which occasionally leads him to attach such importance to trifles as his deliberate judgment condemns. From this weakness it is probable no man on earth is completely delivered. Mr. Benson, who always watched over himself with a godly jealousy, says, on Sept. 1, "To-day I have been much perplexed and distressed with a little matter which does not deserve a thought. I see, if left to myself, I am vanity and weakness in the abstract."—For Mr. Benson to have mentioned the trifle from which he suffered so much, would not have been either wise or prudent. On this subject we are ready, with one of our most sententious writers, to exclaim, "How great, how mean is man!"

It appears that sleep, a portion of which is essential to animal life, may be prevented, not only by the violent operation of any of the passions, but even by an eager desire to obtain it. On November 10, Mr. Benson says, "Last night I got little or no sleep, and that, I believe, because I desired it inordinately, knowing I had a hard day's work before me." He then adds, "But, blessed be God! though I was very poorly in the morning, and apparently very unfit for the labours of the day, yet has the Lord perfected strength in my weakness, and enabled me to

preach three times with much enlargement of heart, and energy of expression. O that I could trust in him for ever !”

To persons incapable of distinguishing betwixt the excellencies of the celebrated Richard Baxter’s writings, and the faults with which several of them are justly chargeable, the least animadversion upon any of his numerous productions will appear blameable. But without wishing to offend any of the admirers of so great and good a man, it may be proper to observe, that no author, whatever may have been his natural and acquired abilities, ever wrote so much as he, and with so much precipitation, without rendering many of his works liable to objection. This author’s writings, in general, resemble the extemporaneous effusions of a man well read, and possessed of a warm imagination, and extraordinary mental powers. He was, for the facility with which he produced volume after volume, the wonder of his age. Except his “Call to the Unconverted,” and perhaps a few others, he seems to have taken little or no care in correcting his works ; hence, when the superfluities, with which several of them abound, are lopped off, a large folio volume is, with advantage, reduced to a moderate octavo. Had he, in addition to his diligence in writing, and the rapidity with which he wrote, possessed such a correct taste, in point of composition, and all other things essential to good writing, as Dr. Samuel Johnson did, none of his works would need to be abridged, but continue, as they came from the author’s hands, to be read with pleasure by the best judges. But this is far from being the case ; for notwithstanding the sound divinity and the strong devotional spirit with which they are imbued, several parts of them are liable to censure, especially as too diffuse and metaphysical. Mr. Benson’s thoughts on one of his works, we find under date the 9th of December.

“I spent some time to-day in looking over Baxter’s Dying Thoughts. But I am rather disappointed in them. The former part of the book consists of vain speculations, bewildering doubts, and curious inquiries into things not revealed, and delivered in language so stiff and obscure, full of technical terms and artificial phrases, that I could hardly read it with patience. Afterwards, indeed, his matter is more edifying ; but he is tedious and prolix.”

The case of a Mr. Reed who, from a state of spiritual happiness, sunk into the depths of despair, is too remarkable to be passed over in silence. Mr. Benson, who heard that man himself, about the middle of December, relate the circumstances of it, gives us the following account.

“This morning Mr. Reed spoke in the general band to the following effect. ‘St. Paul tells us he knew a man in Christ who was caught up to the third heaven ; and that he knew such a man caught up into Paradise, where he heard unspeakable words. My brethren, I know a man, now in Christ, who was sent down into the lowest hell, where he saw things unutterable. For nine months I was in black despair, and what

I suffered during that time exceeds the power of description. I believe I was given up of God to be buffeted of Satan, and that for a reason of which I will inform you hereafter. I used to wonder at the courage, constancy, and cheerfulness with which many of the martyrs suffered such exquisite torments: but I now wonder no more. Let any one only have as much of heaven as I have lately had of hell in my heart, and he will think little of fires, racks, and tortures. O my brethren, if you but felt for a few moments what I suffered for nine months without intermission, you would never again think much to deny yourselves, take up your cross, and follow Jesus.’ ”

This description of mental wretchedness, reminds us of Young’s *AL-TAMONT*: “Didst thou feel half the mountain that is on me, thou wouldst struggle with the martyr for his stake; and bless heaven for the flames; that it is not an everlasting flame; that it is not an unquenchable fire.”

Under date December 25, Mr. Benson gives a further account of Mr. Reed’s remarkable case:—“Mr. Reed gave us a distinct circumstantial account of his late distress and deliverance, and that in a manner so affecting, that I believe there was hardly a dry cheek in the assembly. He first returned the people thanks for the love they had shown him, for their prayers to God for him, and for the care they had taken, both night and day, of his soul and body. He said that the Lord had brought him amongst them once more, to testify in person, that he had heard their prayers for his deliverance. Now he hoped they would join with him in praise and thanksgiving to God for his amazing goodness. He then gave out that verse of a hymn, of which the following are the two first lines:

‘ This God is the God we adore,
Our faithful unchangeable friend.’

“He afterwards gave a particular detail of his late dreadful sufferings and glorious deliverance, during his giving which most of the people shed many tears. They then sung with him,

‘ God of my life, whose gracious power,
Through varied deaths my soul hath led,
Or turn’d aside the fatal hour,
Or lifted up my sinking head.’

“He then informed them, that he believed the devil had been permitted to buffet him for his various backslidings in heart from God. He lamented his formality, his neglect of private prayer, of meeting his band, of attending the church and sacrament; and above all, his leaving his first love. He believed, he said, that God had designed his distress to be for their profit; and hoped they would take warning by him.”

Mr. Benson, on the 24th of December, received a letter from his excellent friend Mr. C. Hopper, of which the following is an extract.

“My very dear Joseph,

“It gives me great pleasure to hear that God has been graciously pleased to restore our brother Reed to the joy of his salvation. O the depth of the riches of the wisdom of God! His judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out. We cannot trace his steps; they are a great deep. But we can fear, love, and adore, his great name. The divine conduct is truly a mystery, sufficient to astonish men and angels. We have but a faint conception of those things that surround us; how then can we comprehend the deep things of God! This one thing we know, all our happiness centres in that God who hath reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ. May we walk worthy of the Lord unto all well pleasing, and daily abound in every good work! Let us live and walk in the Spirit. Let us watch and pray, and be humble all our days.

“I hope God will again revive his work at, and about Newcastle. Perhaps he will begin at this solemn season. To-morrow we shall see the Star coming from Jacob, and the Sceptre rise from Israel. May we go and worship the incarnate Deity, the maker of angels and worlds!”

On the evening of January 1, 1777, Mr. Benson, with the Society at Sunderland, renewed his covenant with God. To him the return of every year was a season of humiliation, prayer, thanksgiving, and extraordinary labour. On this occasion, he thus appealed to the Searcher of hearts, “Lord, thou knowest that it is my earnest desire and steadfast purpose, to devote to thee my body, soul, and all I have and am, and that without reserve!”

He mentions January 8, as one of his happiest days, though in the course of it he rode on horse-back forty miles, and preached, but how often he does not mention. However, he informs us that the Lord made the word delivered by him an instrument, by which many hearts were softened. His sermons were admirably calculated to inform and persuade; which are the two grand ends to be aimed at by every Minister of Christ in all his public discourses. Well-informed hearers, possessed of spiritual discernment, know that it is possible to preach the Gospel in a manner so cold, formal, and systematic, as to prevent its producing any salutary effects. Mr. Benson always spoke to the hearts, as well as to the understandings of his auditors; and never did, as is too often the case, treat eternal realities as if they were fictitious. He believed aright, and therefore spoke to purpose.

It is highly to the credit of the Methodists, that none, who purchase for sale, or even for their own use, articles subject to excise, without the

duties imposed upon them being paid, are suffered to remain in their Society. Mr. Benson, equally famed for piety, talent, zeal, and loyalty, found to his grief and astonishment, that several members of the Society, at Sunderland, were more or less engaged in that nefarious traffic, by which the government is defrauded of the imposts to which it is justly entitled. A practice so disgraceful and indefensible, Mr. Benson would neither connive at, nor tolerate in the Society. But himself shall speak upon the subject.

“Sunderland, March 28, 1777. Last night I met with a severe trial indeed! For this half year past, I have laboured with all my might to suppress smuggling in our Society here, as a practice which, I am sure, is not only contrary to the word of God, and our rules, but even to heathen honesty. I have often spoken against it in the Society, and, sometimes, in the congregation; and now, at the desire of Mr. Wesley, I am examining the people particularly upon that subject, in visiting the several classes. On Wednesday evening I met with little or no opposition; most of those I spoke to being quite clear of blame, or resolving to leave off the practice in question. But last night, on the north side of the town, I found the case quite different, several opposing me with all their might, and especially Mr. —, from whom I expected better things. My mind was so burdened with grief and care, that I could sleep little till after three o’clock in the morning; and all the past day, till about four in the afternoon, I was greatly oppressed. I was not conscious of having done any thing blame-worthy, or of having proceeded farther than was my absolute duty; but I was distressed to think, that the Society was likely to be torn asunder, and afraid lest I should be forced to exclude some of the principal members. I endeavoured to cast my care upon God, and went to Church, it being Good Friday, to receive the Sacrament. I felt much brokenness of heart, a strong desire to devote myself wholly to God, and a measure of resignation to his will, and some peace, in a confidence of his favour, and the testimony of a good conscience. In the afternoon on opening my mind to a friend, I was much comforted, and completely delivered from anxiety.”

To break off the account here would not be doing justice to Mr. Benson himself, nor to those individuals at Sunderland, whose conduct had caused him so much uneasiness.

On the 31st of March, he observes, “Blessed be God, he has been better to me than my fears. Things here have ended greatly to my satisfaction. Yesterday I spoke closely to the Society on the north side, and afterwards referred it to them, whether they would give up smuggling, or leave our Connexion: and nearly the whole of them came to me for their tickets, with much brokenness of heart, and shame on account of their opposition to what is, certainly, for their own advantage.”

Throughout every part of that painful business, Mr. Benson's wisdom, prudence, firmness, and compassion, are equally conspicuous.

About the 16th of June, he paid a visit to his old and very affectionate friends at Edinburgh. The regret he felt on leaving them, after all the times of refreshing which he and they had enjoyed together, has been already noticed. And their joy, on seeing him once more amongst them, was in proportion to the high but just estimate they formed of his worth, both as a man of piety, and a minister of Christ. During his stay there, he was heard by multitudes with reverence and deep attention. But in the midst of all his popularity, in the capital of North Britain, and while surrounded by numerous friends, the very sight of whom inspired him with pleasure, he felt his spirits depressed. But though he knew and mentioned the secondary cause of that depression, he traced it to Him who metes out to his people, collectively and individually, the portion of suffering which, taking the whole of their existence into the account, is most for their advantage. Of the scriptural doctrine of Divine Providence, he had clear and consistent views; and, hence, received his joys and sorrows as from the hands of God, who, without being in any sense the author of sin, "doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of earth."

"How wisely," says Mr. Benson, "the Lord mixes bitters with our sweets, and amidst our prosperity and success, sends us a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet us, lest we be exalted above measure. I have been received here (in Edinburgh) with so much kindness and joy, among my friends, and have had such liberty in preaching, and such large congregations to preach to, that I should, probably, have begun to think well of myself, had not the Lord visited me with ill health, and low spirits, arising from want of rest; a way which he often takes to humble and prove me. Lord, teach me resignation!"

On the 20th of June, at a place called Sheephill, in the Newcastle Circuit, Mr. Benson preached abroad to a very large congregation. All were remarkably serious under the word, and many deeply affected. At the Love-feast, which he afterwards held in the Chapel, to use his own words, "all seemed to be broken down, and every one's tongue loosed to declare the goodness of the Lord."

To those who form any thing like an adequate idea of the warm affection felt by true Christians for their Pastors, and of the love felt by those Pastors for them, the following account of Mr. Benson's feelings, and those of his friends at Newcastle, will not appear matter of surprise. "June 23. Last night and this morning, I took my leave of a weeping congregation at Newcastle, composed of persons whom I affectionately love, and amongst whom I have laboured for three years, much to my satisfaction. To part was like tearing one's body asunder. Few could sing, or look up, for weeping; and I, who rarely shed tears, wept so as

to be unable to speak. O Lord, do thou reward this people for their kindness to me."

This truly Christian separation of Mr. Benson from the people of his charge, among whom he had faithfully laboured so long, brings to our mind the affection to St. Paul manifested by the elders of Ephesus, when he delivered to them his farewell discourse. Having finished his incomparable address, "he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him; sorrowing most of all—that they should see his face no more."

Mr. Benson, on his way to the Bristol Conference, preached at Sheffield, Derby, and Birmingham. His was a truly missionary spirit; and hence, wherever Providence placed him, it was the delight of his soul to preach "the unsearchable riches of Christ." Surely God made him the honoured instrument of "turning many to righteousness," and he will, of course "shine as the stars for ever and ever."

On August 8, he says, "We have had an edifying Conference. Mr. Fletcher's visit to-day and yesterday has been attended with a blessing. His appearance, his exhortations, and his prayers, broke most of our hearts, and filled us with shame and self-abasement, for our little improvement."

In his way to Bradford, in Yorkshire, to which he was appointed, he preached at Wolverhampton, Boston, Mansfield, Manchester, and Bolton. At Manchester, where he had overflowing congregations, he was enabled to preach with more than ordinary liberty and power.

During the course of his reading, on the morning of September 5, he came to the end of that unanswerable work written by Grotius, on the truth of Christianity; a work which, its being written in Latin, and by such a master of language as well as argument, will secure its being read in every future age. It may be considered the Father of modern Apologies for Christianity. "I have," says Mr. Benson, "read it formerly, but not with that pleasure and profit I have read it now. It is an admirable performance, and perfectly convincing upon the subject. I rejoice to find the truth of a religion, on which I rest my everlasting all, so evidently demonstrated."

One great and good effect produced by the accounts of their Christian warfare, given by eminently holy, great, and useful men, is the encouragement they afford to the great mass of sincere Christians. For when these find that the very men whose talents and piety excite not only their esteem but admiration, have been subject to depression of mind and various sorrows, in common with themselves, their hope of final victory receives an accession of strength. Who that beheld Mr. Benson in the zenith of his popularity, and the height of his usefulness, and when he was equally admired for his piety and zeal, could imagine, unless in-

formed by himself, that the language of his heart was, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes?" But such was the case, as appears from many parts of his journal. In Halifax, on December 4, he says, "O how far am I short of the character of the first Christians and Ministers of the Gospel! I have read, with prayer, the eight first chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, at certain times this week, and I am confounded to find myself so far short of their experience. Lord, how long! Do thou undertake for me, and bring me nigh by the blood of the covenant, for I cannot bear to live in this state of distance from thee, whom my soul desireth. Surely, Lord, thou art no respecter of persons. O let me, like Peter, John, and Stephen, become full of faith and the Holy Ghost, that I may be a faithful steward of thy grace, and minister of thy word. Alas! how little progress I make! About six years ago, when at Oxford, my convictions, desires, &c. were the same that they are now; and then, as now, I longed for the baptism of the Holy Ghost."

This language of humility and desire is that of a soul pressing on to perfection.

Mr. Benson, on October 7, after reading a part of Philip Henry's Life with pleasure and profit, thus prayed: "Lord, help me to imitate him, especially in private prayer and family religion." A little after, and under the same date, he adds, "I have resolved to be steady in reading the Hebrew Bible, with prayer, till breakfast every morning; and the Greek Testament, or some devotional piece, with prayer, from five till six in the evening. The rest of the day I hope to devote to reading, writing, visiting, &c. as shall seem most to the glory of God."

Using his time, with every other talent, to God's glory, to whom he knew, he must give account, he found he had not a moment of it to waste upon visits of mere compliment, or in trifling or uncharitable conversation. He like a man of christian prudence, kept at the utmost distance from meddling with any matter foreign from his sacred office. But, though an excellent model for Ministers to copy, he was frequent and full in complaints against himself, both as a Christian, and a "steward of the mysteries of God." The preference which he gave to others, by no means more wise or holy than himself, evinces that his humility was genuine. We mean nothing invidious when we say, it does not appear that Philip Henry, a man eminent for gifts and grace, was, in any respect, his superior; but Mr. Benson thought very differently, "Lord," says he, "how highly am I honoured! Whereas that excellent man, Mr. Philip Henry, preached many good sermons, on the Lord's day, to four or five people, besides his own family; I have generally a thousand or fifteen hundred to preach to on that day, and two or three hundred often on the week-days, and yet how poor must my discourses be in comparison of his!"

How much would the amiable and heavenly-minded Philip Henry have preferred Mr. Benson to himself, had he been his cotemporary, and personally acquainted with him !

Thus truly good men, whether Ministers or private Christians, mutually give the preference to each other. As they rise in the divine life, they sink in humility.

At a place called Knowles, Mr. Benson, on the 14th of October, was led, while addressing a congregation, to insist with strong religious feeling on the infinite willingness of Christ to receive the vilest of sinners; and such a divine power attended the word upon that occasion, "that the whole congregation was melted into tears, and some, unable to contain themselves, cried aloud for mercy."

Two days after, when at Bradshaw, near Halifax, Mr. Benson says that the Lord enabled him, in the course of that day, to preach four times with enlargement of heart. Upon each of those occasions, many of the hearers were much affected; but especially in the afternoon, when the congregation was unusually large, while he described the miserable state in which they would be found at a dying hour, and at the day of judgment, if, weighed in the balances, they should be found wanting.

In the faithful discharge of the duties attached to the office of a Christian minister, Mr. Benson proceeded to the end of the year; on the last day of which, he says, "Another year is now elapsed; and, blessed be God, though I have cause to mourn over many moments misspent, and many opportunities for doing good finally lost, yet I have also cause to be thankful, that I find in my heart the peace of God which passeth understanding."

On January 1, 1778, Mr. Benson, after having preached at three different places, joined with the Society at Halifax, in renewing his covenant with God. "I found it," he observes, "a good time, and so, I trust, did many others."

It is the opinion of some, who express a desire for the spread of evangelical religion, that, in order to its making a progress amongst persons of taste and refinement, it ought to be exhibited from the pulpit in a style capable of gratifying the taste of those who cannot relish truth itself, unless when clothed in the beauties of language. They would not have the names of the Divine Persons, in the mysterious and ever-blessed Trinity, mentioned, except upon special occasions; such as when the Trinity of persons in the unity of the Godhead is the subject of discussion. At other times, they would generally substitute, for the old word *God*, the *Supreme Being*, which they think are terms of better sound; for, with them, sound is of great importance. The word *Messiah*, they are of opinion, would be far less offensive to the ears and taste of refined infidels than such terms as the *Son of God*, or *God's own Son*. What modern phraseology to adopt for the *Holy Ghost* or

Holy Spirit, they are rather at a loss to determine; but they seem inclined to think, that the less is said of the agency of the Holy Ghost, in the conversion of sinners, the Gospel will give the less offence. The new birth they would designate a great *moral* change; and, as people of taste and fashion generally object to the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit, they would have it defined, when introduced at all, in such a manner as not to shock the prejudices of those who altogether reject that doctrine. Such phrases as the "damnation of hell," "everlasting fire," "their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched," though scriptural, they would never have brought into a discourse, addressed to persons of taste and fashion. To the following passage, taken from the Homily on Fasting, they object, as containing language and sentiments intolerably coarse and offensive:—

"When men feel in themselves the heavy burden of sin, see damnation to be the reward of it, and behold, with the eye of their mind, the horror of hell, they tremble, they quake, and are inwardly touched with sorrowfulness of heart, and cannot but accuse themselves, and open their grief unto Almighty God, and call unto him for mercy."

In the first age of Christianity, there were people of profound learning, as well as of taste and fashion; Greeks, that sought after wisdom; one of whom would, in the course of a few hours, have proposed as many questions on the subjects of religion, virtue, the gods, moral evil, &c. as would have employed St. Paul himself for years to answer; and when answered, the reply to every question would have been made a subject of fresh debate; for a Greek sophist was prepared to dispute equally for or against every proposition. But did the Apostle study to please those disputers of the world, by so forming his doctrine, or modelling his style, as to suit their taste? By no means. "Where," saith he, "is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" And, instead of wasting his time, by multiplying arguments to convince the Jews of the absurdity of their continuing to seek a sign, after all the signs and miracles they had witnessed in vain; or, by a process of reasoning, to persuade the Greeks that all their boasted wisdom was foolishness with God; he, with the authority of a man, writing under the influence of plenary inspiration, asserted the fact, and proceeded to preach Christ crucified, though to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness.

Mr. Benson, in imitation of St. Paul, and the other Apostles, used great plainness of speech. He never sacrificed sense to sound, nor hesitated to exhibit divine truth in language well understood, and long consecrated to Divinity. Those who ascended the pulpit for the purpose of displaying their abilities, and exciting the admiration of their auditors, he, with pity, left to the praise of men, their merited reward.

Yet without attempting to please men by any other means than what had a direct tendency to promote their spiritual interests, he was one of the most popular preachers in England. Often did the sighs, groans, and tears of crowded congregations evince, that the power of God accompanied his ministry. Numbers, savingly converted to God by his instrumentality, and thousands of believers built up in their most holy faith, by means of his public preaching and private instructions, were the effects of his popularity. But, however admired by others, he stood low in his own estimation; a sure proof of his eminent piety.

On Feb. 8, after having preached with uncommon earnestness no less than four times, instead of delighting himself by a recollection of his extraordinary exertions, he fell under his own censure. How evidently does the man of God, living for eternity, appear, by his observations upon the occasion!

"I began," says he, "but I fear I have not ended this day in the Spirit. The enemy has been too cunning for me. He, I fear, and not the Lord, has prompted me to exert myself in preaching so much beyond my bodily strength, that I injured my breast, and brought a degree of guilt upon my conscience." He then adds, "I have not sufficiently attended to the declaration, 'Not by wisdom, nor by might, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.'"

To readers who "separate themselves, sensual, not having the Spirit," many parts of this Memoir will appear effects of enthusiasm. To those who know not God, the word *enthusiasm* is found very convenient, as, by applying it to the religion of the heart, they suppose themselves able to prove, that all who profess to experience divine consolation, labour under a peculiar species of mental derangement. An attempt to accommodate the truths of the Gospel to the vitiated taste of such unqualified censors, would merit severe reprehension. Unawed by the frown, and far superior to the sneer of such pretended philosophers, we quote from Mr. Benson, as follows:—

"February 28. I bless the Lord that he has richly rewarded me to-day for yesterday's labour, when I only wished to be pardoned for not improving the day better. When I arose in the morning, I found a strong desire to spend the day in retirement and prayer, and during my morning devotions, the Lord drew very near, and comforted me much; but especially at and after breakfast, he shed his love very powerfully abroad in my heart, and gave me an indescribable hungering and thirsting after righteousness. I could do nothing but pray that I might be holy, as he who has called me is holy. Every thing else appeared to me so insignificant, as not to deserve a thought. O how I longed to speak and think of nothing else! And O how desirable that time appeared to me, when I shall glorify his name, and do his will, without imperfection, and without end!"

Those who were but partially acquainted with Mr. Benson, having known little more of him than what they collected from his public discourses, all of which, in different degrees, were well calculated to gratify the understanding and mend the heart, cannot easily imagine, with how much timidity he frequently stood up to preach. Luther, a man possessed of no ordinary share of natural courage, generally ascended the pulpit with fear and trembling. To such fear as that intrepid Reformer often felt, Mr. Benson was far from a stranger; but, as in the following case, after having entered upon his subject, he possessed that Christian fortitude which enabled him to preach the Gospel with an authority becoming an ambassador of Christ.

“March 15. I have been, contrary to my unreasonable fears, much assisted this evening in publishing the glad tidings of salvation to a large assembly. I do not know that I ever was led to make so free an offer of a full, perfect, and universal pardon to all who would accept, in the way of repentance and faith, the inestimable blessing. This is properly preaching the Gospel; and such doctrine as this I rejoice to preach, as the one foundation of my own hope, and of the hope of every criminal.”

By those who would banish religious affections from the Christian world, or at least insist upon their being so languid as to render their existence problematical, all accounts of extraordinary revivals of religion are considered as so many proofs of the prevalence of fanaticism. To the workings of love, joy, and fear, when excited by things that are seen, they do not object; it is when eternal realities excite those passions that they censure their operations. A passion for learning, for military fame, or his country's weal, a man may possess to such a height, as to swallow up every other, and be a fit subject for praise with the enemies of religious affections; but let a man say, unless when repeating the Confession, that “the remembrance of sins is grievous to him, and the burden of them intolerable,” and they will declare him to be far gone in the dangerous disease of religious madness. But let him, after the removal of his guilt, declare, that he is enabled to “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory,” and they will consider his mental disease as nearly incurable. In vain will it be asserted, that he excels in the practice of the civil and social virtues, converses rationally on every subject respecting this life; for all this, they say, they can account, upon rational principles, as, in common with the generality of maniacs, his madness discovers itself by his absurd views of some one subject, and that religion is that by which his is discovered. In the view of those opposers of religious warmth, and advocates of spiritual death, in what a state of insanity must St. Paul have been when he said, “We are exceeding joyful in all our tribulations!” Nor will such censors allow Mr. Benson to have written the following paragraph during the course of a lucid interval:—

“Halifax, March 19. The Lord is risen indeed, for he hath appeared to us this day in all our meetings. In the morning many wept while I read how he made himself known to his disciples, on their way to Emmaus, and at noon my heart was enlarged, and I had liberty in preaching. But we had the most remarkable time at the love-feast. After we had waited a considerable time, and a few had spoken, my soul was drawn out, and my mouth so opened to speak with power, that the whole congregation seemed greatly affected and broken down, and some cried out aloud. Lord, let not this fall to the ground!”

Mr. Benson, on the 19th of May, wrote the following brief account of a youth at Armly, near Leeds. “I rode over to see Mrs. Clarke’s son, who is dying of a consumption, in the sixteenth year of his age. He was as much unconcerned about his soul as most young people, till about a month ago; when finding that, in all probability, he had not long to stay in this world, he began to look for happiness in a better. He was much distressed for a few days, till one night, under preaching, his soul was comforted with a sense of his acceptance with God. During a few days, his faith was weak and his hope wavering; but at length all his doubts and fears were dispelled, and he was favoured with that peace which passeth all understanding. I found him rejoicing in the Lord with joy unspeakable and full of glory, in expectation of soon receiving the end of his faith, the salvation of his soul.”

On the 21st of May, Mr. Benson very properly makes a distinction betwixt obedience to the divine will, and that joy or comfort in which too many place the whole, or at least the chief part of religion. “I found,” saith he, “a spirit of prayer all this day, and my mind has been stayed upon the Lord; but I have not been much comforted, nor do I desire comfort so much as holiness.”

In the estimation of those who remain in their unrenewed state, and to whom, of course, the things of the Spirit appear foolishness, all spiritual deliverances and divine comforts, are so many effects of a heated imagination. How mysterious to them must those words, addressed to the disciples, appear, “Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.” With this divine joy, afforded to genuine Christians, in proportion to their holiness, with perhaps some exceptions, strangers to God are wholly unacquainted. But, happily, many thousands are of an opposite description, and consequently capable of entering into the spirit and full meaning of the following paragraph.

“May 28. This morning, while at prayer, the Lord graciously led me into the way of faith, simple, easy, unreasoning faith, and set my soul quite free from all those doubts and fears which harassed my mind the two past days. This time of trial and heaviness has had its use. I have seen a little more into my exceeding weakness, and the need I have continually to look to him, who hath promised to help in time of

need. 'This indeed is the way to expect nothing from myself, but every thing from him as my wants require.'

How low and grovelling are the views of those men, however learned and ingenious, in examining the works of God, who lose view of the wisdom and goodness of him, who gave existence to all that is, and who is the Preserver, as well as Maker of the universe! How contemptible is that philosophy, which never teaches its votaries to look, through second causes, to the Source of Being, who is, from the perfection of his nature, infinitely superior to all created things; in comparison with whom "all nations are as nothing, nay, less than nothing, and vanity!"

Such views as these Mr. Benson found highly pleasing and profitable, when at a village called Elland, near Halifax, he, on the 10th of June, says: "This afternoon I had a most delightful and retired walk on the banks of the pleasant river which waters this fruitful valley: and, while the verdure of the fields, the songs of birds, and the beauty of the landscape, the most delightful I ever beheld, cheered and regaled my senses; my soul ascended to the glorious Author of these wonders of creation, and praised and magnified the great Source of beauty and perfection."

On June 15th, Mr. Benson preached at Birstal to a large and attentive congregation. During the application of his subject, the people in general were much affected. His remarks upon the occasion evinced his unwillingness to believe, without sufficient evidence, that any persons were savingly converted. Tears, groans, and weeping aloud, are frequently circumstances which accompany true repentance: but they are no more than circumstances, which may, in many cases, be unaccompanied by a change of heart; whereas men may be truly converted to God, who have never been witnessed by others to groan, nor cry aloud, on account of their guilt and misery. But let us hear Mr. Benson upon this subject.

"I have often observed men's passions to be moved, when they were by no means convinced of sin, much less converted to God. I have long seen, that to be affected, and converted, are different things, which do not always go together. Lord, the work is thine; and, if thou dost not accompany the word with thy blessing, it may indeed cause the people to shed tears, but not to give up their sins."

Mr. Benson, under date June 26, mentions his having read with much satisfaction two Pamphlets on Infant Baptism. "They at least," saith he, "show that it was the custom in the Primitive Church to baptize infants, for three hundred years after Christ, as it was also the practice of the Christians from that time down to the Reformation. And this to me is a sufficient argument, that it was the custom of the Apostles; otherwise, how could such an institution take place so near their times, and so universally?"

It has frequently been observed by men of sense and piety, that some sincere Christians, in estimating their character, are apt to lay undue stress upon divine joy, and that at the expense of neglecting, more or less, to cultivate the other parts of the fruit of the Spirit. To preserve characters of this description from practical Antinomianism, into which matter of fact proves that Arminians, in common with Calvinists, are liable to fall, close practical preaching is necessary. The following passage, bearing date July 1; proves with what judgment Mr. Benson insisted upon every part of outward, as well as of inward, religion.—“I have enjoyed peace, with a measure of nearness to God, but without any great degree of consolation the three last days. This evening I enforced upon the people, Phil. iv. 8, ‘Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just,’ &c. and found it a useful time. The practical truths contained in that passage, cannot be too much impressed upon our hearers, as we are too apt to magnify our joyful feelings, and to neglect that holiness, inward and outward, without which we cannot see the Lord.”

At Bramley, near Leeds, on July 5th, Mr. Benson gives a short account of a love-feast, at which a young man was suddenly convinced of sin, and almost as suddenly made happy in God. “This afternoon we have had a remarkable love-feast at Pudsey, several being exceedingly happy, and some so affected that they could not restrain themselves from crying aloud. One young man, in particular, trembled, fell upon his knees, and cried aloud thus: ‘Lord, have mercy upon me! I am a lost sinner.—O God, have mercy upon me!—If I do not get an interest in Christ, I must perish for ever! O Lord, deliver me!’ Soon after, he expressed his confidence in the mercy of God through Jesus Christ. We afterwards concluded with singing and prayer.”

Those who are capable of entering into the spirit of the Litany, and especially into that most impassioned part of it, which we shall now transcribe, will be able, without calling in the aid of enthusiasm, and in perfect accordance with Scripture and reason, to account for the strong religious affections, noticed in the above paragraph.

“Son of God, we beseech thee to hear us. O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, grant us thy peace. O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. O Christ, hear us. Lord, have mercy upon us. Christ, have mercy upon us. Lord, have mercy upon us.”

Let some hundreds of devout worshippers in one of our churches, repeat those petitions with an audible voice, which was the general custom in this country before people learned the unhappy lesson of being ashamed to be reckoned devout; and many of the inhabitants of Great Britain, who profess to be members of the Established Church, would pronounce them a set of fanatics, who, from the circumstance of their being within

the pale of the church, possessed facilities for effecting the overthrow of our excellent mixed government, to the existence of which, its union with the church is essential. Alas! how little do those conformists to the church, not as it is founded in truth, but as a political institution, know how much encouragement they afford to the enemies of both Church and State; men who know, as well as the best friends of the Constitution, that the destruction of our Church, as an Established Church, would prove the ruin of our civil government! Let our Church be generally considered, not as a true church, independent of the circumstances of its being established, but as an engine of state; and it will at no very distant period, be overthrown, and involve the state in its ruins. Those very ministers, generally designated the evangelical clergy are the men who, by their holy lives and faithful preaching, are the chief ornaments and strength of a church, which, in such a country as this, whatever laws might be enacted in its favour, could not very long survive *universal*, or even *general* contempt.

July 8, Mr. Benson chiefly employed in reading Natural Philosophy, which, he observes, he found to be both instructive and edifying. He then adds, "O thou Source of all being and blessedness, who would not love, adore, praise, and magnify thee with all his powers! Give strength unto thy servant, that I may ever make it my one business and felicity to serve thee."

This year the Conference was held at Leeds. On the 5th of August a proposal was considered in it for sending preachers to Africa. We give the following account of that proposal, from Mr. Benson's Journal, chiefly for the purpose of recording an act of humanity performed by an English Sea-Captain, and of the excellency of our laws, which do not tolerate slavery in any part of the United Kingdom.

"The proposal was made in consequence of two young princes from Calabar, in Guinea; who desired that Missionaries might be sent to instruct them in the English language, and the great principles of Christianity. These young princes had been cruelly torn away from their own country, and sold as slaves in America, where they remained upwards of seven years. An English Master of a ship, to whom they told their story, pitied them, and advised them to run away from their master; which they did, and were brought by him to England. Their case was examined, and brought before Lord Mansfield; and they were set at liberty. They made some stay at Bristol, and were instructed in the English language and the truths of Christianity, by some of our people, but especially by Miss Johnson. After they had returned to their own country, at their request, two persons, who were Germans, but members of our society at Bristol, were sent out for Guinea; but they both died either before, or soon after they landed on that coast. The young princes sent over petitions for others to go. Two good young men

offered themselves for the difficult and dangerous service. But after the matter was seriously considered, it was concluded that the time had not arrived for sending Missionaries to Africa. What was said on this occasion, and the prayers which followed, were manifestly attended with a great blessing; and the Lord was present of a truth."

This Conference, which was closed on the 8th of August, Mr. Benson says, was the best he had ever attended; that Mr. Wesley possessed an excellent spirit, and preached remarkably well; and that several matters of importance came under the consideration of the Preachers. But notwithstanding the excellent account he gives of the Conference, he adds, that he had suffered loss in his soul, for want of retirement.

From Bradford he was sent to the Manchester Circuit, which then occupied an extent of country that, for a number of years, has contained many circuits. The increase of the Methodists since that time, and consequently of circuits, in Lancashire and Yorkshire, affords matter of astonishment.

Men truly alive to God delight in perusing the lives of such as have been eminently holy. Some of this description have adorned every age of Christianity; but among those lights of the world, few have ever shone with milder or brighter lustre than the Marquis de Renty, a French Nobleman, and a member of the Church of Rome. In that corrupt and superstitious church, he ordinarily, as he said, possessed a plenitude of the ever-blessed Trinity. Mr. Benson's views of this eminent saint of God will appear from the following quotation.—"August 18. I have been reading a part of De Renty's Life. Alas! how far short do I come of the faith and hope by which he was animated!" And on the 19th he says, "This morning I was much edified by reading that chapter in De Renty's Life which speaks of his love to God. But I am quite ashamed to see myself, with far greater advantages, at such a distance from that portion of divine love which he possessed."—This is the genuine language of holy love, and true humility, its inseparable companion.

On the 28th of August, he mentions his having found it profitable to read, with prayer, a part of Thomas Walsh's Life. That eminently holy, zealous, and successful minister of Christ, was a native of Ireland; who, having renounced the Church of Rome, of which he had been a member, became an itinerant Preacher amongst the Methodists. His being an extraordinary Biblical scholar was one of the least of his excellencies. He often preached with great effect to his countrymen in their native tongue, of which he appears to have been a master. By his ministerial exertions, especially his long and loud preaching, his constitution was soon ruined; and when no older than twenty-eight, at which period he ended his holy and truly honourable career, having lived much in a short space, he had the appearance of a man of seventy. In

his last illness, his mind was amazingly distressed by powerful temptations; nor did he at the close of life manifest that he possessed any great portion of divine comfort. To some, who laid undue stress upon joyful feelings, that circumstance accompanying the death of a man so eminently holy, proved rather discouraging; but to others, not less devout, but more intelligent, it did not create the least uneasiness. Among these judicious characters, Mr. Benson occupied a distinguished place; and hence, instead of suffering the circumstance in question to detract, in his judgment, from the worth of so great and good a man, his language upon the occasion was, "I long to follow, though at a distance, that eminent servant of God." On the 30th of August, he says, "I am ashamed to think how small a progress I make in holiness. Alas! how far short I come of the example Christ has set me; nay, of the attainments of Thomas Walsh! His fervency and constancy in prayer; his mortification and self-denial; his deadness to the world and all it contains; his care to redeem the time, spending none of it in vain conversation or ceremonious visits; his recollection of spirit, and steady seriousness; his love of God, and zeal for his glory; his incessant labours for the good of souls; in short, his whole deportment in public and private, make me quite ashamed of myself, though at the same time I feel my soul athirst to follow him as he followed Christ."

On the 1st of September, when at Oldham, Mr. Benson, who knew well what estimate to set upon time, reflected severely upon himself, for having slept so long in the morning, that he had no time for prayer before he went into the pulpit at six o'clock. "After preaching," says he, "I rode into Manchester, and found my mind in a sweet and comfortable state. But not being watchful, when in company at, and after dinner, and not endeavouring to improve the conversation as I ought, I grieved the Spirit of God, and was greatly distressed with reasonings and doubts all the afternoon. And while preaching and meeting the classes, I was so harassed with temptations, that sometimes I hardly knew what I was saying. It has been a time of trial, and I fear I have not behaved properly under it, for I have not looked to the Lord in prayer and faith as I ought to have done."—This honest account given of himself by a man whose religious character, from his first making a profession of piety, was never impeached nor impeachable, will appear to unawakened readers wholly unaccountable. But let them only engage in the spiritual warfare, and they will soon be able to form some idea of those inward conflicts with which they are at present wholly unacquainted.

Persons of sense and piety have learned the happy art of making all they read subservient to their intellectual improvement, and spiritual edification. From works, which the generality of persons peruse merely for the sake of amusement, they derive useful instruction; and studiously

endeavouring to act in conformity with all their acquired knowledge, they adorn their Christian profession. Eminent for mental endowments, as well as Christian virtue, they are well fitted for being extensively useful in the Church of Christ. To them, the reading of different publications, on a variety of subjects, proves a sufficient relaxation; and hence they do not need, for the purpose of unbending their minds, any of those frivolous amusements which do not comport with the true dignity of character maintained by men of reason and religion. Amongst those of whom this account is descriptive, Mr. Benson stood in the first rank. As a specimen of the spirit in which he read, and of the observations he was in the habit of making upon the works which came under his inspection, we quote what he says of the celebrated Columbus.

“New Mills, Sept. 5. I spent the afternoon in the fields reading the voyages of Columbus, and meditating upon the vanity of all earthly things, and folly and madness of mankind, who traverse sea and land, exposing themselves to hardships of every kind, and encountering dangers and deaths, to gain that which, when gained, only embitters their joys, and increases their misery. Poor Columbus discovered a new world, but found as little happiness in it as in the old. Cares and labours, want of rest, hunger, change of climate, and various other inconveniences, broke his constitution, and ruined his health; while the ingratitude of some, and the treachery of others; the unkindness of friends, and the malice of enemies, broke his schemes, disappointed his hopes, and rendered him truly miserable; and so much the more in proportion to his dignity and elevation. O what a rest! what a felicity! to be delivered from covetousness and ambition, and to be content in whatever circumstances we are placed!”

Mr. Benson's having read some account of Columbus's voyages in the forenoon, proved no impediment to his communion with God either then, or in the evening. “After tea,” he observes, “I spent the time till preaching in meditation and prayer, and found particular nearness to God, and communion with him. I read on my knees John xvii., a chapter that has been made spirit and life to my soul a hundred times, but which I never found more reviving than I did this evening. O how did my heart and soul join with our great High Priest in those words: ‘I pray not that thou wouldst take them out of the world, but that thou wouldst keep them from the evil.’” After quoting a few other passages from that chapter, he adds, “I was enabled to believe that the Lord did hear and answer my prayers, and that he would supply all my wants out of his abundant fulness.”

Mr. Pugh, a clergyman with whom Mr. Benson had been intimately acquainted, paid him a visit on the 27th of September. “I found,” says Mr. Benson, “my soul united to him as formerly, and was thankful

for the unexpected blessing of seeing once more a person I so dearly loved."

This incident led Mr. Benson to contrast his situation in life with what it would have been, had he, according to his original intention, become a minister of the Established Church. His observations upon this subject merit attention.—"The Lord has made me very thankful for the daily opportunities he gives me, in the course of his providence, of preaching his word, and meeting his people. And though in temporal things my situation is far less comfortable to nature than it would be were I a Clergyman in the Established Church; yet I have a larger field to labour in than any parish minister can have, and far more opportunities of doing good." He then adds, "I do, and will bear my trials with resignation and thankfulness."

To those who walk humbly with God are frequently vouchsafed times of refreshing, by which they are greatly encouraged on their journey through life. With one of those seasons Mr. Benson was favoured on the 29th of September. The account of it would be injured, if given in any other words than his own.—"I have had a blessed season this evening in prayer, reading, and meditation. I have found my will sweetly resigned to the Lord, my heart devoted to him, and all my powers so impressed with his greatness and goodness, that I adored and praised him in humiliation and love. I was particularly inspired with a spirit of prayer. O how my soul hungered and thirsted after righteousness, and to do and suffer all his will! I gave myself up wholly to his disposal, from a satisfactory conviction that he would make all things work together for my good, as I clearly saw he had hitherto done. I traced his goodness from my childhood, marked all his dispensations towards me, especially since my conversion to him, and owned they had all been well ordered, in infinite wisdom, and boundless love. I saw all my trials, though grievous to nature, had been the means of advancing me in grace, and had mightily wrought for my good."

Some time before November 27, Mr. Benson was brought into great distress of mind through manifold temptations. But he gave himself to prayer; and God, who has graciously promised to deliver his people that call upon him in the time of trouble, granted him, after many severe exercises of mind, a more than ordinary share of divine consolation. "This morning," says he, "while at private prayer, I enjoyed sweet peace and near access to God, and found much comfort in believing. But all this was little to what I found afterwards, both at family prayer and all the day. My soul was, as it were, let into God, and satiated with his goodness. He so strengthened my faith, as perfectly to banish all my unprofitable reasonings, as well as doubts and fears; and he so filled me with humble, peaceful love, that I could, and did, devote my

soul and body, health and strength, to his glory and service, only longing to spend and be spent for him. O how I longed to offend him no more! To do all his will, and to promote his glory! My heart and soul cried, 'Lord, make me holy and useful, and ordain concerning me as thou pleasest. Welcome trials, tribulations, and temptations, only do thou support me, and establish my soul in this peace.' O what a change has the Lord wrought in me! Glory be to God, I am a new creature. I am, indeed, put into the possession of a new nature. I now experience, that though no trial for the present is joyous but grievous, yet afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness. When I was last here, I was oppressed with heavy trials, but the Lord hath turned my sorrow into joy."

The judicious reader will readily discern, that Mr. Benson never dilutes Scripture truth by circumlocution, nor darkens it by an abstruse style. He was too sensible of the value of souls, and too earnest in endeavouring to pluck them as brands from the fire, to find either leisure or inclination, for clothing sacred truths, either in his writings, or public discourses, in words out of common use, or unknown to the mass of the people. The foppery of language which disgraces some pulpits, and which the young and inexperienced are apt to confound with eloquence, though it seldom or never reaches the hearts of those to whom it is addressed, he held in that contempt which it justly merits. Such was the divine power which accompanied his discourses, and the proper theological style in which he preached, that his hearers had no inclination to exclaim, "How well he speaks!" Losing view of the speaker, and feeling the force of the truths delivered by him, many of them, awaking from the lethargy of sin, in an agony of distress, exclaimed, "What must we do to be saved?" Such effects are rarely, if ever, produced by means of those discourses which, on account of their artificial style, and modish phraseology, pass with the vulgar for so many specimens of eloquence.

While Ministers of the Gospel should condescend to men of low estate, they ought seldom to appear in public unless in the discharge of the duties attached to their ministerial office, the dignity of which, in all their social intercourses, as well as public discourses, they ought sacredly to maintain. This they will find *difficult*, if not *impossible* to do, if often found in mixed companies, or even such as may be considered select. Seneca complained that, after being among men, he always found himself less a man; and how often have some of those, the grand business of whom is to save, instrumentally, both themselves and others, had to lament, that, on returning to their closet, after being three or four hours in company, they found that they possessed less of the spirit of Christianity than they did before. This, Mr. Benson apprehended to be his case on the 30th of November.—"Being in company, and too little in

private, I did not find such nearness to God, as I did the three last days. If I have grieved thy Spirit, by neglect of prayer, or by unwatchfulness, Lord, do thou forgive me; and preserve, O preserve me from every known and secret sin."

Before we follow Mr. Benson into the year 1779, it may be proper to insert an extract of a letter to him, written on the 19th of October, 1778, by his intimate friend the Rev. N. M. Cheek.

"Dear Sir,

"I have snatched the first favourable opportunity of acknowledging, that notwithstanding our long absence, and the many miles distance between us, yet my heart stands in the very same relation it did, to you, from the first of our acquaintance; and I should rejoice much to have the pleasure of seeing you once more in the flesh. You cannot think more frequently of me, than I do of you; and I often think there is not a man I know that I would choose so soon to help me in the Gospel as yourself. I have often thought how much it would please me to have it in my power to bring you into the Church; not that, I believe, you would be more extensively useful, but you would be useful in a way you cannot now. Did I not believe that, through God's mercy, I am enabled in some sense to serve him and his Church where I am, I should quit my present for my former connections; for I still retain the same love and regard for all that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. I rejoice greatly that you find yourself so happy, and so resigned to your present station. O, my dear Benson, it matters not how we spend a short and uncertain life, so that we are approved by him who gave it to us. I know in your way, trials come thick, and crosses are both frequent and heavy; but great is the assistance that is promised. Your own declarations testify that God comforts your soul, blesses your labours, and makes his work your delight. You find, then, that as your trials are, so are your comforts, and as your work is, so is your reward. Who would not labour for such a Master, and be faithful to such a Lord!"

On the 1st of January, Mr. Benson preached at Manchester, and afterwards, as was his custom at that season, joined with the Society in renewing his covenant with God. To many it was both a solemn and comfortable opportunity.

Even genuine Christians are, at least till rooted and grounded in love, in danger of not thoroughly discerning the inseparable connection which subsists betwixt inward and outward religion, and, consequently, of attempting to cultivate the one, at the expense of partially neglecting the other. Of this many Mystics, as well as numbers of their determined opposers, have often been equally guilty; the former by depreciating the means of grace, and the latter by not sufficiently looking through

them to Him who has appointed them, as so many channels, for the purpose of conveying his grace to all that use them faithfully. That views such as these were familiar to Mr. Benson, appears from his saying, on the 6th of January, "I have enjoyed much serenity of mind, and peace of conscience all this day; but I have found myself in danger from luke-warmness. Lord, teach me to unite the rest of divine peace, with the labour of divine love."

The following account would lose much of its worth by being given in any other words than those used by Mr. Benson.—"Jan. 11. This evening I preached on occasion of the death of Abraham Brierly, a very exemplary Christian, who, for many years, adorned the Gospel. From a child he feared God, and was preserved by his grace from all open sin. As he grew up, he regularly attended Church and sacrament; was honest in his dealings, and unblameable in his whole behaviour. But, notwithstanding the regularity of his conduct, he was far from being satisfied with his state; and hence he went to several Clergymen to request their directions. Still he did not find rest to his soul, but on the contrary, grew more and more uneasy, till at last, having little or no hope of salvation, he was strongly tempted to lay violent hands upon himself. In this state he went to Mr. Lee, a Clergyman, who gave him some encouragement, by saying, 'I know not what advice to give you, because I never was in your state, but, I assure you, I wish I was in it, as I am satisfied that they who sow in tears shall reap in joy.' Some years after this, he had a faint hope that God would be gracious to him, but no evidence of his pardoning mercy, nor heart-felt peace and joy in believing. At length, when he was upwards of forty years of age, as he went along a street one evening, he heard some people singing a hymn or psalm in a house. While he stood and listened, he thought, 'Surely these people know more of religion than I.' He afterwards, upon inquiry, learned that they were Methodists, then generally reckoned the worst description of schismatics; but this did not deter him from hearing one of their Preachers, on the following Monday evening. In the course of less than a week, he heard one of them preach again. On his way to hear the second time, he was stopped short in the street by a sudden suggestion, that God would be offended, if he went. In this dilemma, he lifted up his heart to God, and prayed that if they were not his people, and if it was wrong to go among them, that he would prevent his going; but if otherwise, that he would remove those fears, and incline him to go forward, by giving him to feel love to them. This prayer was immediately answered; for he felt his fears dispelled, and his mind disposed to proceed; and whilst among them upon that occasion he felt that he loved them most cordially. His master, who employed him to dye fustian, learned that he went to hear the Methodists,

and being much displeased with him on that account, threatened to turn him out of his employment, if he went to hear them any more. He assured his master that he had received much benefit by going only twice to hear them; and as he knew they preached the truth, he was determined to hear them at all events. His master fulfilled his threatening. But the Lord made him ample amends for this outward loss, by inward consolation; for within two days after, he was filled with joy and peace in believing. From that happy period of his life, to his latest hour, he walked in all the commandments of the Lord blameless. For the support of himself and family he submitted to drive a cart with coal; in which humble situation he continued till his last sickness confined him to his house, where, after suffering for some time, he died in the Lord."

Men of study sometimes find it difficult, if not impossible, to dismiss from their minds a train of ideas connected with subjects that have recently occupied their attention. That difficulty, or impossibility, which is sometimes accompanied by an uncommon degree of mental uneasiness, arises from their having dwelt too long upon certain subjects, or studied them too intensely; for either of these causes will produce that painful effect. Persons of genuine piety, who watch over themselves with a holy jealousy, are apt to fall under their own censure, whenever they cannot, by an act of their will, dismiss every idea which prevents their turning their attention to any subject they wish to contemplate. But this may, without affording any ground for such censure, frequently happen; for the most holy and discerning cannot always exactly determine how long they may, without injury to body or mind, study any given subject, or with what degree of intenseness. These observations, which appear to have truth for their basis, naturally flow from the following paragraph taken from Mr. Benson's Journal.

"Ashton, Jan. 21. I see more and more the necessity of watching against needless thoughts and cares. I rose this morning in great peace, and spent the day very profitably, and in great tranquility, till about four o'clock; when, as I was riding along, allowing myself to think too much upon making some alteration in the plan of our Circuit, I found my mind so occupied by this trifling affair, that I was quite indisposed, when I came here, for either profitable reading or prayer." This severe, but unmerited censure passed by Mr. Benson upon himself, is equal to a thousand proofs, that it was his constant study to approve himself to God; and that, Abdial-like, he would have done so, had "worlds judged him perverse," on that account.

On the 26th of February, he observes, that he had been so afflicted with a violent cold, as to be unable to read or study the two preceding days, "but," says he, "I preached both nights with the ability the Lord

was pleased to afford me." He then adds, "I thank God, he enables me to be resigned to his will, and desirous to be devoted to his glory and service, in time and in eternity."

Considering the avidity with which he studied, and how often, how long, and how earnestly he preached, and that frequently when a man, more careful of his health, would not have ventured into the pulpit; his having lived so long is a proof that uncommon study and extraordinary ministerial labours are compatible with longevity.

On the 2d of March, Mr. Benson gives a remarkable account of Thomas Irlam, who resided near Manchester. The following is an abstract of that account, the whole of it being too long for insertion.

"Thomas Irlam, from whose lips the account was taken, being under divine influence, joined the Methodist Society, in 1754, and for some time after met in Class. But, not continuing to watch and pray, he soon lost all relish for Divine things, and sought after wealth with an avidity inconsistent with a life of holiness. All the schemes he formed to effect his purpose, were blasted. Finding this to be the case, he murmured against the dispensations of Divine Providence. Giving way to the temptation, that he was by a decree of God destined to eternal misery, he sunk into dreadful and hopeless sorrow. In vain did his Christian friends endeavour to persuade him that he was still an object of the Divine mercy; for he continued to believe that he must be eternally miserable. Shortly after, he in a great measure lost the use of his reason; and, being inexpressibly miserable, he frequently rolled himself upon the floor, and made many attempts to destroy himself. On some occasions his friends prevented him from executing his purpose, and on others, when upon the point of effecting it, he was deprived of power. He was sent to the Lunatic Hospital, at Manchester; but after remaining there for several months, he was brought home without the least symptoms of recovery. For more than five years he felt no abatement of his misery, being 'tormented,' to use his own words, 'night and day;' and never sleeping, save when nature, unable to suffer any longer, sunk down, and left the soul to bear the load alone, amidst the distress of doleful dreams. After he had in some degree been restored to the use of his reason, but still continued as wretched as ever; he thought that God spoke to his heart, 'Be patient under thy affliction; and I will relieve thee.' Those words were to him as life from the dead; and he immediately believed, and rejoiced with joy unspeakable. Tears gushed from his eyes, and his heart was filled with the peace and love of God." Mr. Benson adds, "He still continues to possess the liberty with which Christ hath made him free, and daily recovers bodily strength."

On the 13th of March, Mr. Benson mentions his having read a part of President Edwards' "Thoughts on a Revival of Religion in New-England." That tract is highly valuable, as it contains a complete an-

swer to the strongest objections that have ever been urged against extraordinary revivals of Religion. The Author of that judicious work, was one of the strongest advocates for the doctrine of necessity.

That doctrine being cursorily mentioned, Baxter's three reasons why it ought to be rejected, may be acceptable to the reader; especially as Baxter was, except in point of style, no way inferior to Edwards. They were both great and good men. It ought to be rejected, Baxter says, 1. "Because, whatever vain talk is used to blind men, it makes God the sole, total, necessitating cause of all the sin that is committed in the world. 2. It unavoidably destroyeth the Christian Faith; for if God be really the determining cause of all lies and other sins in the world, then his veracity, which is the formal cause of faith, is gone. 3. Because it feigneth God to damn most of the world for not conquering God, who insuperably predetermined them to the forbidden act, that is, for not being gods, or greater than God; and that he sent Christ to die for those sins, which he premoved man to irresistibly."

While we admit that these reasons, were we acquainted with no others, would induce us to reject the doctrine of necessity, we gladly allow that Edwards, though a rigid Necessarian, was a sound practical Christian. The following sentence written by that extraordinary man, Mr. Benson says, came to his soul with infinite sweetness; "The conversion of one single soul is a more glorious work than the whole material creation." He then adds, in the true spirit of a man of God alive to the importance of his sacred office, "Lord, what am I, that thou shouldest employ me as an instrument in such a work!"

It is to be feared that evil speaking often makes a part of what is called confidential conversation. Some professors of piety boast that they say whatever they think of such individuals as become the subjects of their conversation, and maintain that if they adhere to truth, however much they say to the disadvantage of others, they are not reprehensible. These are unquestionably dangerous characters, whose company ought to be shunned by all who would live "in love and charity with their neighbours." Wretchedly ignorant of some essential parts of practical religion, they confound evil speaking with lying; sins as distinct as any prohibited by the Divine Lawgiver. To the unscriptural and absurd casuistry of such characters Mr. Benson was decidedly opposed. This appears from the censure which he passed upon himself in the following words. "This evening I was refreshed by an interview with my dear friend Hopper; but I am afraid I was not sufficiently watchful in conversation; I fear I did not speak as tenderly of others as I could wish, in the like circumstances, they should of me."

On the 29th of March, having finished Edwards' work on Original Sin, he pronounced it, upon the whole, a most clear and convincing performance; but said, it is inferior to that written by Mr. Wesley upon

the same subject. The latter of these works is one of the ablest, for clearness of method, strength of argument, and logical exactness, that ever issued from the press. It seems to be equal, if not superior, to that author's celebrated tract entitled, "Predestination Calmly Considered."

Mr. Benson accompanied Mr. Wesley to New Mills, in Derbyshire, and from thence to Stockport, on the 1st of April. His journey, though pleasant, did not, on reflection, afford him much satisfaction; hence he says, "My mind was not enough stayed on God, and, therefore, I profited but little in my spiritual interests." He adds, "However, while Mr. Wesley was meeting the society, I was much comforted, and also after supper, while he was praying with us."

In the course of April 7, Mr. Benson preached four times. At three o'clock, while he was preaching in the open air, some who stood at a distance, by trifling and conversing aloud, disturbed the congregation. But, instead of being put out of countenance by the noise and folly of those untutored individuals, he, with the dignity becoming his sacred office, addressed them directly; and such were the effects of his doing so, that they all became silent, and some of them, by their tears, proved that their hearts were deeply affected.

Mr. Wesley's reply to Dr. Middleton's "Free Inquiry," is one of the ablest pieces that ever flowed from his masterly pen. The Doctor, who did himself credit by his *Life of Cicero*, laid himself open to just and severe censure by his "Free Inquiry." He was evidently an infidel, who, without formally renouncing Christianity, endeavoured to sap its foundation, by representing all the Primitive Fathers as fools, or knaves, and many of them both the one and the other. The credibility of those Fathers, as witnesses, Mr. Wesley fully demonstrates, in his reply. "It is," Mr. Benson says, "well written, and very useful, especially the account he gives in the conclusion, of a Christian, of Christianity, and of its evidences."

We find, under date April 28, that Mr. Benson conversed for some time with an intelligent Roman Catholic lady. She acknowledged that the whole of religion was included in faith working by love, or in love and obedience; and that all, who possessed this religion, whether in or out of the Church of Rome, would be saved. She allowed that God alone could pardon sin, but maintained, at the same time, that priests had authority to absolve penitent sinners; their absolving impenitent sinners, she admitted, would answer no valuable purpose.—No doubt, pious and intelligent individuals may be found amongst Roman Catholics, who embrace those Christian sentiments; but still it is a tenet of their Church, that out of its pale there is no salvation. Even Pascal himself, justly famed for piety and distinguished talents, roundly asserted the impossibility of being saved out of the Church of Rome. By main-

taining that unscriptural and absurd dogma, the Papists, as a body, fix a gulf betwixt themselves and the whole of the Protestant world.

On his way to visit his friends in the North, Mr. Benson preached at Halifax, on the 12th of May, and at two places in its vicinity. On the morning of that day, he says that he was much humbled by a sense of his unworthiness, by reading a sermon on, "Now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord." While all who had the happiness of knowing him, and were competent to appreciate his worth, admired his calm, warm, and steady zeal, in the discharge of the duties attached to his office, he said, "I saw myself very deficient in love to souls, and concern for the glory of God." When he preached at Bradford, on the 16th of May, multitudes flocked to hear him; the divine power accompanied the word delivered by him, and many were much affected. In every stage of his ministerial course, he was a burning and a shining light. Wherever he came, the word of the Lord burned in his heart as a fire; and hence, however distant from his more immediate charge, he preached, to the multitudes who crowded to hear him, with as much earnestness, as if they had been formally committed to his care.

After preaching at Darlington, he set out for Bishop Auckland, where he spent most of a day with his mother and sister. He preached at Durham on the 22d of May, and then proceeded to Newcastle, and afterwards to Sunderland. On the following day, which was Whitsunday, he preached abroad at the east end of the town. "My soul," says he, "was much enlarged, and my tongue loosed to proclaim the loving-kindness of the Lord; and many were much melted down." He adds, "At noon, on the North side, I was enabled to give sinners a loud call, and to make a free offer of salvation to the most rebellious; and while I preached in the evening, the hearts of many were much affected." At Alnwick, on Sunday, May 30, he was grieved to see so few hearers in the morning, and was apprehensive that he should employ that Christian sabbath to little purpose. But in this he was happily mistaken; for the chapel was not sufficiently large to contain the congregation in the afternoon; and in the evening the town-hall was much crowded. "I believe," saith he, "the Lord was with us both times, as many of the people were deeply affected."

June the 4th he mentions as a day on which he had more than usual liberty of access to God; and that when he preached at Barlow in the afternoon, the unction of the Holy One so attended the word, that, to use his own words, "it sunk into the hearts of the people." In the evening, while he preached in another place, the power of God was so manifested, that the whole congregation was melted into tears. He informs us, that on the 6th of June he was favoured with the divine presence, while he preached at Ballast-hills in the morning, at the Fell in

the afternoon, and at Newcastle in the evening. The congregations were exceedingly large: and in each of them many, by the tears which they shed, manifested that to them the word was as a hammer and a fire to break their rocky hearts.

On the morning of the 8th of June, he says, "I took leave of my dear friends at Newcastle, preaching from Eph. iii. 14, &c. My soul was enlarged, and my tongue loosed, and the Lord was in the midst of us. Afterwards I set out for Weardale, preaching in the way at Colegate, where the congregation was much affected. When I arrived at Weardale, I found a large congregation assembled, whom I addressed on, 'Thou art weighed in the balances, and found wanting.' Many were much broken down, and I trust were favoured with a profitable season." After holding a profitable meeting on the 10th of June, at Barnard-Castle, Mr. Benson proceeded to Ripon. "As I rode along," says he, "I found my heart melted with gratitude to the Lord for being with me on my journey, and making my way prosperous." On his way toward his circuit, he embraced every opportunity that occurred for preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Arrived in his circuit on the 16th of June, he, in the genuine spirit of a man of God, says, "And now the Lord has brought me back in health and peace to the place whence I set out, and was recommended to the grace of God by the prayers of the people. I have great cause to praise the Lord, that he has preserved my body in health amidst much labour and fatigue, and has kept my mind in peace amidst much hurry; and above all, that he has been with me in my labours, and granted me at most places his favour and presence."

The 29th and 30th of June were to Mr. Benson days in which his mind was variously exercised. He says that he was harassed with many reasonings relative to the state of his soul; that he had little or no access with confidence to the Lord; that he was straitened in preaching, and assaulted with strong temptations. But on July 1, his sorrow was turned into joy; hence he says, "Blessed be the Lord, he has once more brought his peace into my heart! This morning his light and love began gradually to cheer my disconsolate mind; he gently dispelled all the reasonings, and doubts, and fears, with which I had been oppressed, and enabled me to cast all my care on him; and all this day I have enjoyed a comfortable serenity."

After having read Mr. Wesley's Letter to William Law, the celebrated author of "A Serious Call to a Holy Life," Mr. Benson observes, "I am more and more in love with the simplicity of the inspired writers, and convinced of the danger of intermixing philosophy with the plain religion of Christ." It is mortifying to the pride of human reason, to find that a man of Law's superior mental powers, degraded himself by contending for many of the greatest absurdities of Mysticism. Mr. Wes-

ley, who at an early period of life was one of his greatest admirers, and frequently consulted him on religious subjects, finding afterwards many sentiments in his writings which he conceived to have a dangerous tendency; wrote, in 1756, the Letter mentioned by Mr. Benson. In that publication, Mr. Wesley, in his very best style, exposes the reveries for which his early and reverend friend was an advocate. In the first paragraph of that masterly work, Mr. Wesley says, "At a time when in danger of not valuing this authority (scriptural) enough, you made that important observation, 'I see where your mistake lies. You would have a philosophical religion; but there can be no such thing. Religion is the most plain, simple thing in the world. It is only, *We love him because he first loved us.* So far as you add philosophy to religion, just so far you spoil it.' This remark I have never forgotten since. And I trust in God I never shall."

In numberless cases Ministers of the Gospel conclude, when they do not preach to their own satisfaction, that their discourses are neither pleasing nor profitable to others. But in this they are frequently mistaken; for many sermons, of which those who preached them are ashamed, prove to numbers an unspeakable blessing. On the other hand, it frequently happens, that the discourses which afford most pleasure to those who deliver them, seem to be neither well understood nor felt by the generality of those to whom they are addressed. The plainest Gospel truths, delivered in language the most simple and least artificial, when accompanied by the influence of the Holy Spirit, never fail to please and profit such hearers, however intelligent, as hunger and thirst after righteousness. If these observations have truth for their basis, the fear expressed by Mr. Benson on the 20th of July was unfounded.—"I preached a funeral sermon this evening, but without liberty of spirit; and I fear it was an opportunity lost."

When Mr. Benson awoke on the morning of the 29th of July, having preached four times the day before, but at none of them to his own satisfaction, finding himself afflicted in body, he was tempted to fretfulness and impatience; but through grace was enabled to overcome.

On the 2d and 3d of August, such were his views of the evil of sin, and of his own unfaithfulness, that his language was, "Ah! my God, what will become of me? Shall I perish after all! Shall I pray, and preach, and travel, and labour incessantly for the good of others, and my own soul everlastingly perish!" This language proceeding from the heart and pen of a man, not only of irreproachable conduct, but of eminent piety, will expose him to the censure of, not only those who maintain that the soul dies with the body, and that there is no such being in the universe as a devil; but to that of all, however orthodox, who seek their chief happiness in created good. To them, however humane and polished, spiritual conflicts and divine consolations are equally unknown.

After preaching three times on the 2d of September, and meeting many classes, Mr. Benson says, "As my day is, so is generally my strength. To thee, my God, be all the glory! Only make me useful, and accept my poor labours, and of myself as thy child; and I entirely resign to thee my body and soul, my health and strength, my time and talents. O my God, I do, and will rejoice to wear myself out in thy service."

At Redhall, near Manchester, he spent part of the 6th of September in reading those letters of Omicron which treat of various degrees of grace. "I found them," says he, "very profitable, but especially that one in which the writer observes, that our repeated failings and miscarriages, and the multiplied pardons we have received, are intended to bring us to an habitual experience of that passage in Ezekiel, 'That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, when I am pacified toward thee, for all thou hast done.' I found that sentence exceedingly sweet, and was persuaded it was the state the Lord must bring me to."—The late Rev. John Newton, the author of those letters, was a man of eminent piety and uncommon talents. He knew well how to distinguish between Law and Gospel, and equally excelled in his knowledge of doctrinal and practical divinity. His works, which will no doubt be read for ages, prove, in common with those of many others, that men may embrace the doctrine of Particular Redemption, and yet be eminent for piety and a truly catholic spirit. A divine unction, which can be felt, but not defined, pervades all his publications. He was a true friend to the Established Church, of which for many years he was a distinguished ornament, but at the same time was so far removed from the spirit of bigotry, that he embraced in the arms of Christian friendship, all, however divided in matters of opinion, whom he, in the judgment of charity, deemed to be living members of Christ's mystical body.

To some, who are capable of appreciating the piety and talents of Mr. Benson, it will be matter of surprise, that, with a mind so amply furnished with scripture knowledge, he should, upon any occasion, be afraid to preach. Yet this was frequently the case; but that timidity was generally followed by great enlargement of heart and liberty of expression. An instance of this he gives under date Sept. 12. "My soul was very barren when I rose this morning; and I knew not what I should be able to say to the people; but the Lord has been with me, and made it one of the best sabbaths I have, for a long time, enjoyed. My mind was enlightened, and my heart enlarged, while preaching in the morning, and my mouth was opened to declare their privileges to those whom I addressed. In the evening, I explained, 'The kingdom of God is not meat and drink,' &c., and afterwards met the society and two classes. I did not conclude till nine o'clock; and I think I was

then no more wearied than when I began the labours of the day. O my God, to thee be all the glory !”

The excellence in preaching which Mr. Benson obtained, may be partly accounted for, from a consideration of the severity with which he judged of himself and his sermons. An instance of this occurs under date Sept. 19. “O when shall I learn experience from what I suffer ! This morning I fell into the same mistake, or rather sin, I have often fallen into. Having made choice of that beautiful portion of Scripture, Deut. xxxiii. 26, &c., to preach from, and which I had formerly written upon ; as if I could speak well from it without God’s help, I went into the pulpit with too little desire for, or dependence upon, the Divine aid ; and the consequence was, as I might well expect, I was left to feel my own weakness ; and I fear I was of little use to the congregation. I was afterwards grieved, that I had lost a precious opportunity of doing the people good, and spoiled a fine passage of God’s word.”

It appears that on the 1st of October, Mr. Benson was favoured with strong consolation. “I could,” says he, “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of assurance that, after all my trials, I should, with my latest breath, publish God’s ‘love and guardian care.’ I was enabled to spread all my wants before him, and to tell him all my trouble ; and he plenteously watered my soul. Indeed during the whole day my hope was full of immortality.” That it is possible for a minister, while he is heartily desirous to be useful to the souls of others, to attend comparatively little to the state of his own mind, some have learned from painful experience. Of this, Mr. Benson, whose conscience was always tender, accuses himself on the 4th of October.—“At the love-feast, I was too much engaged in desire and care for the edification of others, to be much refreshed and comforted myself. I fear in this I have, both now and in time past, grieved the Holy Spirit of God, who would certainly at all times have his servants without anxiety.”

About this time Dr. Coke wrote a letter to Mr. Benson, in which he accuses him of having embraced the Arian heresy. The only ground which the Doctor had for preferring that accusation arose, not from Mr. Benson’s either denying or even doubting the doctrine of Christ’s proper Godhead, but from his definition of that doctrine. Thousands, who are sound in the faith, differ considerably in their definitions of the Trinity. The best explanation of that scriptural doctrine is, in our opinion, that contained in the Athanasian Creed ; and yet many, who believe the doctrine, object to that explanation. Whatever may become of its damnable clauses, we should, on several accounts, be sorry to see it discarded from the formularies of our Church. It is fashionable amongst those who reject some of the essential doctrines of Christianity, to rail at creeds and confessions of faith ; while, at the same time, they cleave as tenaciously to their own heterodox creed, as the most bigoted

Papists do to the most absurd dogmas of their pretended infallible Church.

On the 30th of October, Mr. Benson began a letter to Dr. Coke, on the subjects of Arianism and Orthodoxy; but by reasoning too much upon those matters, he brought his mind into a state of heaviness. This is one of the unprofitable and painful consequences of men's reasoning on doctrines, the truth of which rests upon explicit testimony; doctrines proposed in the oracles of God for their faith to embrace, and not their understanding to investigate. Still, there is nothing more consonant with reason than faith; for what can be conceived more rational than to believe, on the authority of infallible inspiration, not what is *contrary* to, but *above*, our reason!

A late eminent Divine, in his famous sermon upon the Trinity, says: "The Word was made flesh. I believe this fact. There is no mystery in it; but as to the manner *how* he was made flesh, wherein the mystery lies, I know nothing about it, I believe nothing about it. It is no more the object of my faith than it is of my understanding." Thus, one of the first masters of reason properly distinguishes betwixt what ought to be received on the authority of Him who asserts it, and what is proposed as a subject for rational investigation.

Having finished his reply to Dr. Coke's letter on the 1st of November, and having, as he observes, left the matter with God, Mr. Benson, on the following day, freed from anxious care, experienced strong consolation. "In the forenoon," says he, "as I was riding to Redhall, and meditating upon the subject of our Lord's divinity, I had such a view of the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him, that I was exceedingly refreshed and comforted; and all the afternoon my soul did magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoiced in God my Saviour. I see, I think, more clearly than ever, that the Son of God could not be an all-sufficient Mediator, did not all fulness dwell in him; all fulness of wisdom and of power, of mercy and of love."

From early youth to the latest period of his life, Mr. Benson was strongly, and from principle, attached to the Established Church. But this attachment did not in the least alienate his heart from Christians of other denominations. Hence, on the 14th of November, he says, "I went this forenoon to hear Mr. Barnes in the Presbyterian Chapel. His manner of speaking is excellent. His discourse was ingenious and instructive; showing, from the little cloud rising out of the sea, how great events arose frequently from small beginnings. He considered it as it might respect our thoughts, words, actions, families, and nations, and illustrated the subject by historical anecdotes. I was much refreshed both in the time of service and afterwards."

Mr. Benson, after having preached in the course of the two preceding days at Thirsk and Darlington, proceeded to visit his aged mother. "I

was comforted," he says, "to see my dear mother once more, and to find her soul in a good state." He spent a part of the 1st and 2d days of December with her; after which he went to Durham, where he preached in the evening. On the 3d, we find he was at Sunderland; there he was much comforted by seeing many of his Christian friends, and finding that they were making a progress in the divine life. On the morning of Dec. 5, he preached amongst his old friends at the Fell, and in the evening at Newcastle. The congregations were large; and God, in whom he reposed his confidence, enabled him to preach, on both occasions, with liberty and power. His language, when he arrived at Rochdale, on the 18th of December, was, "Glory be to God, he has brought me back again to my circuit, after having shown me, since I left it, many mercies."

On the last day of December, 1779, he says, "I have been fully employed in my public work to-day, and have found a measure of inward comfort from morning to night. The Lord gave me a degree of liberty in speaking his word, and I trust I did not speak in vain." What Mr. Benson meant by being "fully employed," many would consider excessive labour. Such were his exertions, that he was generally considered a foe to his body, as he never seemed to consult its ease; and yet such was the goodness of God to him, that few in the vigour of youth and strength of manhood, could have laboured as he did after he had survived his seventieth year. His language, when near the end of his pilgrimage, differed little, if any, from what he used at Manchester on the 2d of January. "The Lord," says he, "has not sent me a warfare at my own cost, but has strengthened me in body and soul, and afforded me, and that unexpectedly, much liberty in declaring his word; and I trust he has followed it with his blessing."

About this time, he received a letter from his excellent friend Mr. Pawson, informing him that Mr. Wesley, and all the Preachers in London, were fully satisfied with his sentiments on the subject of Christ's Divinity. "This letter," he observes, "has afforded me much comfort, and occasioned in me much gratitude to God, who, I see, will never suffer any who trust in him to be confounded."

It appears, from all the accounts given by Mr. Benson, of his course of reading, that he always read with purity of intention, and, consequently, with a desire to increase in holiness as well as in knowledge. On the 6th of January, he says, "I was much edified by reading the first Epistle to the Thessalonians. Alas! how far do I come short of the character and duty of a Gospel Minister!" Thus he judged of himself, while all who witnessed his holy life and incessant labours came to an opposite conclusion.

On October 26, Mr. Benson being at Leeds, and having ground to believe that Miss Thompson would not be averse from becoming the part-

ner of his life, obtained to that end the consent of Mrs. Dawson, her mother. But his approaching marriage to this pious and intelligent lady, did not suffer him to be remiss in his ministerial labours. On the 11th of January, he was favoured with much liberty, while preaching at Huddersfield. He had apprehended that this would not be the case, and hence says, "The Lord has been better to me than my fears."

After having taken leave of Miss Thompson, on the 13th of January, he set out from Leeds for Birstal, where he arrived in time to preach. The congregation was large and attentive; but he says, "For want of previous retirement, and I fear for other reasons, my mind was too little impressed with a sense of the presence of God. O my God, what cause have I to be humbled before thee!" He arrived at Leeds on the 25th of January, where he had the pleasure of spending some time in company with Miss Thompson, destined to become the companion of his future joys and sorrows.

On January 28, at eight in the morning, he was joined, as he properly expresses it, "in holy matrimony to Miss Thompson in the parish church at Leeds, in the presence of Miss R., and a few other select friends." After breakfast, Mr. and Mrs. Benson, accompanied by Miss R., set out in a chaise for Halifax, where they arrived in the afternoon. The next day they proceeded to Manchester.

It is to be lamented that many in the professing world have but dark and confused views of the doctrine of divine providence, and hence do not, in the ordinary course of events, admit the divine interposition. They allow that without God's permission no event can take place, but seem not to know that *bare* permission is not government. How differently Mr. Benson thought upon this subject, the following paragraph demonstrates.—"Feb. 1. I have been much employed in looking back upon the way the Lord has led me into this near and intimate union; and I find that I have infinite reason to adore his grace and goodness in the whole affair from first to last; for divine providence has visibly appeared in it, and again, and again, has God most remarkably answered prayer. O that we could therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works unto the children of men! For his goodness to me I can never sufficiently praise him."

Feb. 4, being a day set apart by Government for a general fast, Mr. Benson preached in the evening at Manchester. His text was Matt. vi. 16, "When ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance," &c. This subject he treated as follows:—"I was led to show that hypocrites want three things; 1st. Sincerity; 2d. Simplicity, or a single eye; and 3d. Spirituality. I likewise maintained that they wanted these with regard to all moral and religious duties, but more especially almsgiving, prayer, and fasting. With respect to the last, I showed, 1st, that it had no farther excellency than as it was a natural fruit and out-

ward sign of true repentance or sorrow for sin; 2dly, an exercise of self-denial and means of mortification; and 3dly, a help to meditation and prayer. Lastly, I charged all with hypocrisy, who in their fasting overlooked these things, and especially such as on these occasions kept an outward fast, and in the mean time neither looked for a change of heart nor reformation of manners." More judicious outlines of a discourse for such a solemn occasion cannot easily be imagined; nor can any, who had the happiness of hearing him preach, doubt of his having filled them up in a manner worthy of his superior talents. In all his discourses, he was judicious, able, and zealous; but, upon special occasions, he excelled himself.

Were we to transcribe from Mr. Benson's journal all that would be found interesting to the generality of pious readers, or even give an abstract of it, we should fill at least three or four octavo volumes; but as it is judged fit to confine ourselves to one, we must necessarily pass over in silence numerous particulars worthy of perusal.

On the 13th of March, he says that his soul was drawn out in strong desire after an entire conformity to the will of God, and after a full renewal in the divine image.

Those Ministers of Christ, who make it the business of their life to save themselves, instrumentally, and those that hear them, obtain, time after time, more clear and consistent views of both Law and Gospel. This, upon the 16th of April, Mr. Benson found to be the case with himself. "For three or four days past," he observes, "I have had very clear views of the way of salvation by faith, and have seen more manifestly than I formerly did, how much I have hurt my soul by idle reasonings. O that I may be enabled to resist them in future!"

Mr. Wesley, at an early period of his ministerial labours, complained that some of his preachers inculcated the doctrine of Christian Perfection in a manner which had a direct tendency to damp the joy of many genuine Christians. Confounding all degrees of holiness with that which is accompanied by freedom from all tormenting fear, they occasionally made sad the hearts of those whom God commanded to rejoice. The following is an extract of a letter of Mr. Benson's, written to Mr. Pawson on this subject.

"April 27, 1780.

"My dear Brother,

"I take the liberty of writing to you again, because I wish to consult you upon a subject which for some days past has exercised my mind no little. In the common course of my reading, I have been looking over Mr. Wesley's former Journals again, and as I proceeded I could scarcely avoid drawing the conclusion, that many of us have departed in doctrine and experience from the faith to which Mr. Wesley

and others then bore their testimony. Have we not, to leave room for a second blessing, set justification too low, by allowing that a person may be justified from all things, who has neither the witness nor fruits of the Spirit, neither peace, sensible peace with God, nor power over inward sin? Or if we affirm that all must have these at first, as evidences and fruits of justification; do we not allow many to think they are in a justified state, who are now, and have been for years, as truly devoid of these, as if they had never received them? And if so, do we not mislead our hearers, and cry, ‘Peace, peace, when there is no peace?’ There is no peace to the earthly, sensual, and devilish; to the proud, the passionate, the covetous; to the carnally-minded, the lovers of the world, the unholy. And if we encourage such, directly or indirectly, to believe that they are justified, and of course children of God; do we not encourage them to believe that without holiness they may see the Lord? For certain it is, he that is a child of God hath everlasting life. If, therefore, I teach that a man may be justified, and yet be carnal, unholy, and unrenewed, I teach that a man may be carnal, unholy, and unrenewed, and yet dwell with God. I doubt not that there is weak, as well as strong faith, and that a man is made a babe in Christ, before he is a young man or father; but I ask, whether any are properly and savingly Christ’s who have not crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts? Whether they are so in Christ, as to be free from condemnation, who walk after the flesh, not after the Spirit; who are not new creatures; the Spirit of life from Christ Jesus not having made them free from the law of sin and death? Hath not Jesus assured us, if he shall make us free, we shall be free indeed? Hath not St. Paul confirmed his Master’s declaration, affirming, ‘Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty?’ And hath not St. John borne the same testimony, in declaring, ‘He that is born of God overcometh the world, and doth not commit sin?’ And, in the mouth of these three witnesses, is it not established, that it is a greater thing than many imagine to be truly justified, and made children of God?”

The truths contained in the preceding letter recommend themselves to the attention of both Ministers and people, as completely overthrowing both practical and speculative Antinomianism.

A readiness to forgive injuries is one of the surest marks of true religion. It was said of Archbishop Cranmer, that he was sure to be a steady friend to any one who had done him an injury. But, alas! how many professors of piety may be found, who take every opportunity that occurs of impugning the characters of those who fall in the least under their displeasure. Mr. Benson, though naturally irritable, was a direct opposite to such characters. Dr. Coke, as already mentioned, had ac-

cused him, without any just ground, of denying the doctrine of Christ's proper Godhead, and by doing so, had, for a time, lessened him in the estimation of some of his brethren in the Ministry. But, instead of adopting vindictive measures, he so gave himself to prayer, that he was enabled to embrace the good Doctor, for such he was, in the arms of Christian friendship. On May 1, he says, "Dr. Coke has been with us this evening. I bless the Lord, notwithstanding the manner in which he has used me, I found nothing in my heart towards him contrary to love."

At Delph, near Manchester, he says, on May 31, that he was much humbled under a sense of the divine goodness, and drawn out in prayer during the whole of the day.—"I found inexpressible sweetness in praying, that as I had forsaken all for the Lord, and had become a poor pilgrim, wandering to and fro for his sake, so he would bless me in my soul, and in my labours. And he heard and answered me. He has greatly blessed my soul and labours this day, making his word, especially at noon, particularly refreshing to many. Praise the Lord, O my soul!"

August 1, being the first day of the Conference at Bristol, after some preliminary business had been transacted, the affair between Mr. Benson and Dr. Coke was mentioned; but Mr. Wesley would not suffer the matter to be debated in Conference, and hence appointed a Committee of the Preachers to investigate it on the following day. "In the afternoon of that day," says Mr. Benson, "we met the Committee, whose unanimous and clear opinion was, that I was no Arian; and that Dr. Coke had no ground for speaking and writing of me in the manner he had done. He seemed very sensible of it, and offered to ask my pardon before them all."

On the morning of August 3, the Committee presented their report to the Conference, and Mr. Benson and Dr. Coke shook hands, in token of mutual reconciliation. Thus that disagreeable affair, which had too much employed the tongues and pens of several who ought to have been otherwise occupied, was brought to a happy issue.

Upon this subject, Mr. Benson, when at Birmingham, on September 15, 1790, wrote the following letter to a very respectable friend and Minister:—

"My dear Brother,

"I am much obliged to you for your kind letter. By writing freely, you have given me a convincing proof of your friendship; but I wish you had done it sooner. It might have been a means of increasing my light in what is, certainly, a point of the first importance; or, it would have given me an opportunity of endeavouring to satisfy you, that

I was not so erroneous in my sentiments as you now seem to think me, and, of consequence, might have tended to preserve love and unity between us, which, I most sincerely pray, may never be broken.

“What an unstable creature is man! Some years ago, when I was strongly inclined to believe the doctrine of the pre-existence of our Lord’s human soul, you were utterly against it, and *half*, if not *wholly*, persuaded that I was verging fast to Arianism, for entertaining that opinion. Now, you tell me, you are a thorough convert to it, and I, for my part, am inclined to disbelieve it. Thus we turn about! May we be preserved from every dangerous and destructive error! May we be kept from imbibing any opinion that would tend to make us think meanly of the Redeemer! I assure you, my dear friend, there is nothing I desire so much as further light respecting his wonderful person; which yet, after all, will, I fear, remain a secret, at least in a great measure, till we see him as he is.

“When I was very young, Dr. Watts’s ‘Glory of Christ,’ fell into my hands. I read it with great attention, and much pleasure. I became a convert to his doctrine, and believed, as you do now, the pre-existence of our Lord’s human soul; a doctrine which then appeared to me to be a key to divers passages of Scripture, and well calculated to reconcile sundry texts, which, without it, seemed irreconcilable. Speaking my mind, perhaps, rather too freely upon this subject, (for it is not essential to salvation,) I became suspected by some good friends at —, to be an Arian, and was, by the bye, warmly attacked, and represented all over the kingdom, as such by —. This brought on a dispute between him and me. The matter came before the Conference, and, upon my explaining myself, and presenting the creed you speak of, I was acquitted of the charge brought against me. I continued in exactly the same sentiments till about two years ago, when Mr. Fletcher’s papers were put into my hands to be prepared for the press. Upon maturely considering what he had advanced, especially upon one point, *viz.* upon the Lord Jesus’ being properly the *Son*, the *only-begotten Son* of God, even before his incarnation, and upon reading carefully Bishop Horsley’s Letters to Dr. Priestley, Bishop Bull’s Defence of the Nicene Faith, and Bishop Pearson on the Creed, universally allowed to be not only a most learned, but also a truly valuable work, and perfectly orthodox;—reading these, I say, and other writings, my views were changed a little, but much less than you seem to imagine. I believed before, that the soul of the Redeemer existed before all worlds, as the first-born of every creature, and was, from its first existence, in the most perfect union with the Father’s Godhead, or with his eternal *Wisdom* or *Word*. I believe *now*, that the *Son of God* was begotten of his Father before all worlds, and was, and is, truly God, not only in consequence of a generation from his Father, which none can declare, but, in consequence of an union with him,

which none can conceive; in other words, in consequence of a perfect and full communication of the Father's Godhead, which is, and ever was, all his own. Now, where is the material difference, unless in words? And I rather think, if you lay aside that expression, the *pre-existent soul of Christ*, an expression which, you must allow, neither reason, nor Scripture, nor antiquity, will warrant our using, you do not differ much from me. If you say, 'Yes, I believe there always subsisted in the Godhead, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost.' I answer, inasmuch as, by the Word and the Holy Ghost, you do not mean two intelligent beings, co-ordinate with, and separate from the Father, I certainly believe the very same; persuaded as I am, God was never without his *wisdom* (or Word) and *Spirit*.

"When I began to write upon the subject, and make additions to Mr. Fletcher's imperfect Manuscripts, I at first thought to introduce the doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ's human soul, and wrote some pages for that purpose; but, after mature consideration, waived it, for the following reasons: 1. I believed it my duty to keep close to the Bible, both as to sentiment and expression, and I could not find in it any such expression as the pre-existent soul of Christ. 2. I revered the doctrine of the primitive church, I mean, as handed down to us in the writings of the ancient Fathers, during the three first centuries, as the best interpretation of the Scriptures, and I found no such sentiments or expressions used by them. On the contrary, they universally speak as though the whole human nature of Christ, his soul as well as his body, were derived from his virgin mother, though by the power of the Spirit of God; representing him as the seed of the woman, as the seed of Abraham, and of David, and as *very man*, which, it is certain, he could not have been; if his soul, which is the better half of man, had not been human, but of quite another nature and origin. 3. I found what I had not at all adverted to at first, *viz.* that for me to suppose his soul to have pre-existed, would involve me in a great, and, I now think, inextricable difficulty. It would oblige me to suppose, that it was reduced to almost, if not altogether, perfect non-entity, upon its first union with the flesh, in the Virgin's womb. For it must have been deprived of all thought and all *consciousness*, and what can remain of a spirit, whose thought and consciousness cease, is hard, if not impossible, to say. Add to this,—4. That we know that Jesus increased in wisdom as well as stature, and in favour with God as well as man, and waxed strong in spirit; all which is perfectly intelligible, on the supposition, that his whole humanity was from his mother, and that he grew up like another child; but very difficult to be conceived, supposing his soul existed before all other creatures, high in the favour of God, and was, from its first creation, possessed of knowledge and power to us inconceivable. These considerations, as well as an unwillingness to throw out any sentiment which might kindle

strife amongst us, made me determine, after many months mature consideration, to waive saying one word about the pre-existence of Christ's human soul. I will not affirm Mr. Flemming and Dr. Watts's doctrine concerning it to be *false*; but, I am sure, I cannot prove it to be true, and I think none can. The plain fact is: The Lord Jesus had a pre-existent nature. What name does the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures give this nature? Does he term it the soul of the future Messiah? By no means; but the *Word*, the *Son*, the *only-begotten* Son of God. Well, then, if any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God. Let him not desire to be wise above what is written, or attempt to mend the language of the Holy Ghost. If you have any doubt whether the Lord Jesus was strictly and properly the Son of God, before his incarnation, read again and more attentively what Mr. Fletcher has observed upon it, (Vind. ch. iii. iv.) and what I have added, (ch. xiii.) I think the Scripture alone proves the point. 'God who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.' Is it not manifest he was God's Son, when God made the worlds by him? The *Logos*, therefore, of St. John (termed indeed, ch. i. 14, *the only-begotten* of the Father,) and the *Son of God*, are not two persons, but *one* and the *same*. You know, all the ancient Fathers considered him in this light before, and indeed after, the Council of Nice, and the whole stream of Christian antiquity, together with the greatest modern divines, at home and abroad, the Reformers, in particular, to a man. Now, surely, the Catholic Church is not to be dissented from lightly, and, I am sure, not out of deference to so fanciful a writer as Mr. Flemming, many of whose expositions, I think, are as perfectly unreasonable and unscriptural as they are singular. But, observe, it does not follow, from our Lord's being the *Son of the Father*, and *from the Father*, before his incarnation, that he is inferior to him in nature, or in order of time. The stream is of the same nature with the fountain from whence it flows, and the light with the sun from whence it issues. And though, in order of nature, the fountain is before its stream, and the sun before its light, yet not in order of *time*. I do not say there ever was a time, when the Eternal Father was without his Eternal Son. He, certainly, was never without him, as his *Wisdom*, if ever he was without him, as his *Word* and *Son*. Let us content ourselves with knowing, in these deep and unsearchable mysteries, only what God has revealed.

"You do not read Latin, or I would recommend you to peruse a very long, laboured and valuable Treatise by Zanchius on the Trinity and the Divinity of Christ, which I have lately read, with much satisfaction, and which, I think, fully proves the doctrine I speak of. The book you mention, I will procure if I can. But, I begin to despair of know-

ing much more upon a subject, on which I have, perhaps, spent too much time already; and is indeed a mystery. I hope we shall understand it better in another world. You must let me hear from you again, and tell me whether you think it possible, by a fair interpretation, to confine the term, *Son of God*, to the human nature of Christ, as derived from the Virgin."

By the Conference above-mentioned Mr. Benson was appointed to labour in the Leeds Circuit, with Mr. Allen and Murlin, men of respectable talents and peaceable tempers. "This," says Mr. Benson, "has been the most harmonious Conference we have had for years, and I hope the most profitable."

Having taken an affecting leave of his Christian friends at Manchester, we find that he proceeded, with Mrs. Benson, towards his new appointment. On the 22d of August, he and the society at Rochdale were much affected in parting with each other. On his way to Halifax, Mrs. Benson had two providential escapes from imminent danger; the one from the horse on which she rode taking fright, and the other from his having stumbled. Mr. Benson, who was in the habit of recording providential occurrences, says, after noticing these, "O, what cause have I to praise the Lord for all his mercies!"

When, on the 23d of August, he entered the pulpit at Bradford, he was uncertain what passage of Scripture he should take as the subject of his discourse; but at length, he says, "I fixed upon Hebrews iv. 1, and I found liberty to say strong and alarming things, by way of cautioning the congregation against carnal security." Having arrived with Mrs. Benson at Leeds on the 24th of August, he found that the kind brethren there had prepared every thing necessary, and even convenient, for his reception. Upon this occasion his language was, "We have exceeding great cause to praise the Lord for his great kindness to us of late, which has indeed been wonderful in many instances. O, that we could glorify him as we ought."

He informs us that he was divinely assisted on the 27th of August, while he explained and enforced, as an introduction to his labours at Leeds, 2 Cor. iii. 5, 6. His discourse from that striking passage, proved an unspeakable blessing to many. At noon he preached at Rothwell, and again in the evening at Leeds to a large and attentive congregation. After the labours of the day, encouraged by what he had witnessed in the course of it, he said, "I trust the blessing of the Lord will attend my labours here."

Mr. Benson had entered upon a very extensive circuit, in which, as in those he had travelled before, crowds, attracted by his talents, zeal, and above all by the divine influence which attended his ministrations, flocked to hear him. Well versed in scriptural theology, he found, ordinarily,

little or no difficulty in dwelling upon any subject suited to a popular audience. By constant reading and study, he, through the divine blessing, daily so increased in knowledge, that his profiting was manifest to all persons of sense and discernment who came under his ministry. He knew how to make a profitable use of whatever attracted his attention, whether the rise or fall of an empire, or the ruins of a fortification, or any thing else, from which even religious characters in general derive no edification. Hence on the 27th of September, when at Knaresborough, he says, "I walked round the town, the situation of which is very romantic, and rather resembles Durham. I took particular notice of the small remains of the Castle, which was once an immense pile of building and a noble structure. But, like all earthly things, it was subject to decay, and it seems that in a few years there will not be left a trace of its existence."

Having returned to Leeds on the 30th of September, he says, "It was an inexpressible comfort to me, upon my arrival here this forenoon, to find my dear partner in good health of body and more comfortable in mind than usual. We united in returning thanks to God, and were exceedingly comforted. At the house of a friend, where we spent the evening, we had some profitable conversation."

Tea parties, as they are generally styled, have often been censured, and not always without just cause, for the frivolity and uncharitableness of the conversation of many who compose them. How many who attend them, as if they had never heard that Solomon pronounces him a fool who speaks all his mind; say all they think of absent characters, however much to their disadvantage! Those censors-general seem not to consider how often themselves may be censured in their absence, by flippant, superficial characters, who have not knowledge sufficient to afford matter for one hour's rational conversation; and who, consequently, (for every fool is meddling,) relate in one company all they have heard in another; nay, what has been communicated to them in private. When will those parties in general resent, with as much indignation, whatever has a tendency to injure an absent character, as they do now whatever is indecent in behaviour or obscene in discourse? When will those trifling individuals, that imitate a female, who is said to have declared, that she had never for years heard any thing, but with a design to repeat it again, be considered as unfit for rational society? When will those parties, than which, considered in themselves, none can be considered more innocent, become, we say not, assemblies for inculcating gloom and melancholy; for such they ought never to be; but companies in which rational and instructive conversation, in conjunction with Christian courtesy, will generally prevail? At a party of this description Mr. Benson virtually, though not formally, presided, on

the 30th of September; at which, in his plain unostentatious manner, he says, "We had some profitable conversation."

In the midst of such labours as many would consider sufficient to destroy any man's constitution, Mr. Benson contrived to find some leisure for Biblical criticism. On the 4th of October, when at Wetherby, he says, "I have spent this day in reading Bishop Lowth on Isaiah, and comparing his translation with the Hebrew text. He takes great liberties with the original, I think rather too great sometimes. However, in general, his alterations of the text, and his remarks upon it, are very just, and well worthy the attention of the learned."

At Ackworth, on the 17th of October, Mr. Benson tells us he was much profited in reading a few chapters of "Kempis's Christian Pattern;" which is perhaps one of the best devotional works ever published, next to the Sacred Volume. The unction of the Holy One pervades every chapter it contains. Like the old "Whole Duty of Man," an excellent work, it is admirably calculated to promote the progress of holiness in all who are savingly converted to God; but defective in point of instruction with respect to the doctrine of repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. After mentioning that his soul had been blessed in reading a part of that work, he adds, "I saw that I have infinite reason to praise God for innumerable mercies, temporal and spiritual; and, especially, for his long-suffering towards me for many years, during which he has borne with my great unfaithfulness. O that I could now begin to love and serve him as I ought, and that for this purpose he would help me with his power!"

About this time Mr. Benson was engaged in perusing Dr. Delany's "Revelation Examined with Candour." The justly admired author of that celebrated work was one of Dean Swift's most intimate friends; and one who furnished the world with a more favourable account of that great, though strangely eccentric, character, than the Earl of Orrery did. Delany, in his account of Swift, delights to dwell upon such traits of his character as show him to advantage, while Orrery takes little or no pains to blend the lights, to which a picture of the witty Dean has a just claim, with the shades which his most partial admirers can never blanch.

The work written by Delany, referred to by Mr. Benson, is a very excellent performance. In it several of the strongest objections urged by infidels against Divine Revelation, are candidly considered, and satisfactorily answered. The author's Life of David is a very able and well written work. His sermons on relative duties are so defective in point of evangelical doctrine, that, in this age of Gospel light, they do not occupy a high rank amongst Theological works. Of "Revelation Examined," &c. Mr. Benson remarks, "It is a most excellent and useful

work, and sufficient to convince any infidel of the Divine authority of the Scripture."

That Ministers of the Gospel, sometimes censure their own discourses with undue severity, few acquainted with their decisions upon them will be inclined to dispute. That Mr. Benson was pretty much in the habit of doing so we have many proofs. On the 2d of November he says, "I was a little surprised to-day, upon meeting Mrs. D. in the street, to hear her request me to print the sermon I preached last night, as I had really thought it one of the most insignificant I had preached since I came to Leeds."

The temptations, and those even of a very painful nature, with which some ministers of the Gospel are frequently attacked, and that sometimes while they are preaching the word of life, whatever preparation they may have made for the purpose; form one of the many mysteries of Divine Providence. Mr. Benson, whose heart and soul were in his Divine Master's work, after having been favoured with much enlargement of heart in prayer throughout the morning and afternoon of November 29th, was painfully exercised while preaching in the evening. "I was," says he, "much harassed with temptation all the time." Yet, he adds, "while I was speaking on the sufferings of Christ, the people were much affected."

This, say some, is one of the bad effects of extemporary preaching, which might be avoided by ministers' taking their sermons, written at full length, into the pulpit. That it is a painful effect, occasionally produced by that mode of preaching, does not admit of a dispute; but that it is a bad mode when taken in connection with the many advantages by which it is accompanied, never can be proved. When or where have we seen such present and lasting moral and religious effects, produced by the instrumentality of written sermons, however excellent and well read, as thousands of times were produced by means of extemporary discourses delivered by Mr. Benson; discourses, in which light and heat were so skilfully blended, that they were found equally calculated to affect the heart and improve the mind?

It is recorded of the celebrated BOERHAAVE, one of the greatest physicians, and best of men, that as soon as he rose in the morning, which was generally very early, he retired for an hour, which he devoted to prayer, and meditation on some parts of the Scriptures. He often told his friends, when they asked how he could go through so much fatigue, that the strength he received from God, while engaged in his morning devotions, afforded him spirit and vigour for the business of the day. And if BOERHAAVE received an accession of bodily as well as of mental and spiritual strength, by waiting on God in private an hour every morning; it is reasonable to conclude that Mr. Benson was, during the two hours which, on the morning of Dec. 25, he devoted to prayer and

meditation, strengthened for the labours of the day; a day in which his soul was abundantly blessed, and a peculiar power attended his public ministrations. But himself shall speak upon the subject.

“Christmas-day.—I rose about six o’clock this morning, and spent the time till eight in my own room, in meditation and prayer. My mind was sweetly stayed upon the Lord, and my desires strongly drawn out after him. I longed for his presence in my soul and in my labours. Many from all parts were assembled, at nine, and the Lord was in the midst of us of a truth. While I was explaining the message of the angels to the shepherds, and especially towards the conclusion, while I was exhorting believers not to fear, either on account of their past sins, or present infirmities, or the power of their enemies, or their own weakness; not to fear death, nor the wrath of God; the unction of the Holy One was felt by us, and the congregation and myself were much affected, and many abundantly comforted. O how did the Lord pour his love into our hearts, and cause our souls to rejoice in him! After the meeting broke up, we went to church, and heard a good sermon most miserably read. At half past one, I preached again, but did not find much liberty. However, at five in the evening, at Seacroft, the Lord opened my mouth and enlarged my heart, while I explained and applied, ‘For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.’”

It frequently happens that matters of no moment, and which in a few days, or hours, are forgotten, produce in the minds of some, considerable uneasiness. A case of this sort Mr. Benson mentions on the 31st of December; on which occasion he remarks, “O how weak I am! I have been so much grieved at a little thing, that I have been uncomfortable all the day. Here is my weak side. The enemy prevails with me to reason about matters, more than I ought, whereby my mind is distressed. O that I could at length leave things with God!”

The beginning of every year was to Mr. Benson a special season of self-examination and thanksgiving. Thus he begins the year 1781:—“In the morning I was refreshed while brother Kenworthy was speaking of the mercies of God compassing us about. The mercies of God have indeed compassed me about during the last year. Respecting my marriage, the birth of a son, together with the dispute between me and Dr. Coke: in all those matters I have seen the hand of God: and I have infinite cause to praise him for his goodness. O that I could trust in him with my whole heart, and praise him for ever and ever! In the evening I preached at six o’clock from Deut. xxix. 10—14. It was a remarkable time. My heart was much enlarged, and my mouth opened, and the Lord was graciously and powerfully present. The Society stayed after the sermon was concluded; and in a solemn manner we renewed our covenant with God.”

Every day Mr. Benson carefully attended to these two excellent directions, "Never be unemployed; never be triflingly employed." Whatever he engaged in, he performed both sincerely and heartily. In the whole course of his reading, he aimed at spiritual, as well as mental improvement. On January 9, he observes, "I was much profited this morning by reading and considering a part of Schougal's work entitled, 'The Life of God in the Soul of Man;' a book which I never read in vain. O how amiable is the religion he describes! but how far am I from possessing it fully and constantly." From this and numerous other passages in Mr. Benson's Journal, it is evident, that, in proportion to his progress in the divine life, he pressed with eagerness after all that holiness which it was possible for him to attain.

Ministers, who, like Mr. Benson, have studied Divinity as a Science in all its doctrines, precepts, promises, threatenings, &c. find comparatively little difficulty, even upon short notice, in preaching upon any doctrine, precept, promise, or threatening, contained in the sacred volume. To those who do not know this, it appears matter of astonishment, that a preacher, having chosen his text in the pulpit, should be able to deliver from it an able and suitable discourse. These observations naturally arose from what Mr. Benson says of himself on the 4th of February. "In the morning, I had intended to preach on 2 Cor. xiii. 5; but when I entered the pulpit, opening upon a hymn on the subject of Christ's feeling for his tempted members, I found it suitable to my own state, and thinking that it might be so to the state of some present, I gave it out, intending, if any suitable text occurred to my mind while singing, to preach from it. Heb. iv. 14—16, soon occurred, and, trusting in the Lord, I spoke from it with great freedom, and I hope to the profit of many."

No trait in a Christian's character more fully demonstrates his sincerity in religion, than the readiness with which, from a spirit of true humility, he prefers his brethren to himself. BAXTER, a man eminently holy, and whom, when we consider his ministerial and literary labours, we must consider a prodigy of diligence, looked upon Joseph Alleine as far superior to himself, both as a Christian, and a preacher of the Gospel. But had the zealous and heavenly-minded Joseph Alleine such an idea of himself, as was formed by his holy and excellent friend Baxter? By no means; for the judgment he formed of himself, being from *evidence* not *charity*, he considered himself a babe both in knowledge and holiness, when compared with that extraordinary character. It is a question, in the discussion of which we are not interested, and on which our attempting to decide might appear invidious, whether Mr. Benson, in point of piety, talents, zeal, and usefulness, was not equal to either one or other of those ministers of Christ. But this question Mr. Benson would, in a moment, have decided against himself. This is evident from what he

says on the 5th of February. "At noon, taking up Joseph Alleine's Letters, and reading a few pages in them, I was much humbled under a sense of my unfaithfulness. O how far short do I come of the zeal and fervency of this servant of God! O Lord, stir up my languid desires after thee, and the salvation of precious souls."

By the various, and sometimes distressing trials the ministers of Christ are called to pass through, they are experimentally taught to sympathize with the followers of Christ, and administer suitable encouragement to them in all the temptations with which they are exercised. The state of their own minds, frequently influences them in their choice of texts. This was probably the case with Mr. Benson on the 14th of February. "I went," says he, "into the pulpit to-night under a deep sense of my unworthiness to speak in the name of Him, to whose grace I was conscious I had been very unfaithful. However, the Lord, ever merciful and long-suffering, was pleased to assist me, and make the word a peculiar blessing, while I explained how we had a High Priest above who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities."

The unguarded professions made by some pious, but not well-informed individuals, have tended much to bring the scriptural doctrine of Christian Perfection into disrepute amongst many who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Those professors have, in effect, maintained the necessity of embracing *their definition* of entire sanctification, in order to the enjoyment of that unspeakable blessing. Hence, sometimes, a few persons with nothing in their tempers or conduct to distinguish them from the bulk of genuine Christians, have professed to be holier than any of their brethren, who did not adopt their phraseology, when speaking their experience. How differently did the great and venerable JOHN FLETCHER think and write upon this subject! Did that apostolic man maintain, that men, in order to be perfect in love, must embrace his definition of Christian Perfection? By no means. Nay, he went so far as to hope that some of his pious opponents, who rejected that doctrine, were so happily inconsistent, as to enjoy that perfect love, for which he was so able and consistent an advocate.

How well Mr. Benson was qualified to check extravagant and unscriptural professions, will partly appear from the following passage in his Journal, bearing date March 3. "This evening, at the select band, the conversation turned chiefly upon the full assurance of hope. One or two spoke as though they were sealed to the day of redemption, and could not possibly fall, and as though this were a distinct blessing, received after entire sanctification. We endeavoured to persuade them that the full assurance of hope did not imply the impossibility of their falling; and that it was not a distinct thing, given after sanctification, but a blessing received when we became children of God, and that increased in proportion to our progress in holiness."

At a place called Yeaden, after having preached three times, in the course of the 10th of March, and spoken particularly, in meeting classes, to 120 persons, Mr. Benson observes, "I have not enjoyed that nearness to the Lord and communion with him which I most desire, and without which the performance of no outward duties can administer satisfaction and comfort to an immortal soul, the immense desires of which were made for the Infinite, and cannot rest in any inferior object. O my God! when shall I live to thee constantly and alone!"

In proportion as a Christian increases in the divine life, he feels the more disposed to engage in the important duty of private prayer. In what a prosperous state then was Mr. Benson's soul on the 12th of March, at the conclusion of which he wrote as follows:—"Blessed be the Lord, this has been a good day. In the morning after breakfast, finding particular nearness to the Lord, I devoted almost the whole of the forenoon to prayer, and found my soul much refreshed in the performance of that duty. Many passages of Scripture afforded me great comfort, especially Acts xxvi. 17, 18. O how my soul was drawn out after the Lord in desire, that he would make me a minister and witness to himself, and an instrument in opening men's eyes and turning them from darkness to light, &c. I was enabled to lay several things before the Lord in prayer, and found a measure of faith in that promise, John xiv. 13, 14; a promise that has often yielded me much comfort, but I think, seldom or never so much as to-day. I, in particular, longed to experience the full power of the Gospel I preach, and to act consistently with what I recommend to others."

Luther and others of the first Reformers had clear and distinct views of Justification by faith. This doctrine having been scandalously abused by many of the first Protestants, tended much to stop the progress of the Reformation; and to this day it is abused by Antinomians. But, however abused, it is a doctrine according to godliness; and, embraced in connection with the other doctrines of the Gospel, is, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, productive of divine joy and universal holiness. These seem to have been Mr. Benson's views of the subject, when on April 4, he made the following observations.

"I have been profited to-day by reading some of Luther's sermons, which I think set justification by faith in the clearest light, and are particularly calculated for the comfort of those who mourn under a sense of sin formerly committed, or of the imperfections that still cleave to them. He discourses so sweetly and convincingly concerning the goodness of God, and encourages all lost sinners to put an entire confidence therein, in such a manner, that it is hardly possible to resist his arguments, or to retain any doubts or fears. I found my faith greatly strengthened by what I read; and I saw more clearly than ever the great importance of such doctrine." Again, when at Ferry-Bridge on the 5th of April, he

says, "I have been both instructed and comforted by reading more of Luther's sermons; and I have found a strong desire, that the Lord would enable me to preach more than ever in this way; which I see to be both according to Scripture and experience. One of the sermons I have read to-day is on Prayer; and I stood condemned by it, having, alas! too frequently prayed without faith."

With what candour, openness, and simplicity, Mr. Benson censured himself on account of whatever he conceived to be faulty in him, either as a Christian, or a minister of the Gospel, appear in numerous parts of his journal, but in none, perhaps, more conspicuously than in the following paragraph, which bears date April 17. "I see clearly that I have been very faulty in time past, in preaching too much upon holiness and works, and too little upon that faith which is the spring of all: and in my own experience too, I have regarded free grace, as well as the faith which receives it, too little, and have sought holiness, in some degree, in a way in which it is not to be found." It is evident, from this passage, that the better any become acquainted with the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith, they will see the more clearly how productive it is of Christian holiness.

It is a grand device of Satan, to tempt believers to cast away their confidence, whenever they experience comparatively little joy in the Lord. The force of this temptation Mr. Benson frequently proved to his sorrow. On the 23d of April, he observes, "In the forenoon I was much edified with the conversation of Mrs. Clapham. I saw clearly, as I have often done, that in time past I have greatly hurt myself by vain and foolish reasonings, especially when in a low and nervous state of body. At those times, having little sensible joy, I have frequently cast away my confidence, and almost concluded that I had no religion at all. I see I must learn in those trying seasons to cast my care upon the Lord, and resign myself up to his will who knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and who will not fail to give grace in time of need."

Those judicious remarks, which took their rise from a private conversation, afford a strong proof, that Christians may largely contribute to the mutual instruction and edification of each other. Those who are eminently holy, however illiterate, may, by their divine conversation, contribute to the edification of not only such of their brethren as, in point of mental improvement, are not superior to themselves, but even of such as excel in knowledge. Bacon justly says, "Knowledge is power;" and we may add with equal truth, that holiness is power far superior. Never was this truth set in a stronger light than by Milton, who in his matchless Poem, after representing the cherub Zephon as answering Satan with such scorn as he had provoked, adds:

“So spake the Cherub; and his grave rebuke,
 Severe in youthful beauty, added grace
 Invincible: abash'd the devil stood,
 And felt how awful goodness is, and saw
 Virtue, in her shape how lovely; saw, and pin'd
 His loss.”

At Harewood, Mr. Benson, on the 26th of April says, “This evening I discoursed upon John xi. 25, 26. After I had finished, and was ready to conclude that my labour was in vain, fearing I had chosen an unsuitable subject; a young man, unable to contain himself, broke out in praise to God for shedding his pardoning love abroad in his heart. He called upon us all to praise God on his behalf. While he spoke, which he continued to do for a considerable time, many on all sides were melted into tears, and with him rejoiced in the Lord their Saviour. O who can doubt such a testimony, when given in such simplicity, and in terms so artless and unadorned? Glory be to thee, O Lord, for these plain manifestations of thy presence!”

Upon every proper occasion, Mr. Benson delighted to speak and write of Mr. Fletcher in strong terms of esteem and affection. On June 1, he says, “In the afternoon my wife and I drank tea with Miss Bosanquet, (afterwards Mrs. Fletcher,) and I found the visit very profitable. She read us a letter from Mr. Fletcher which proved a great blessing to me. It revived in my mind the remembrance of former times, when we took sweet counsel together. O that I could at length begin to imitate that eminent servant of God!”

Mr. Benson's labours in the harvest of his Lord, continued to be abundant, and, as usual, followed by various success. On the 16th of July, he met Mr. Wesley at Wakefield; and on the following day at Cross-Hall, rendered famous as then the residence of Miss Bosanquet. “Upon the whole,” says he, “these times of hurry and confusion are not profitable to me. I much prefer retirement, reading, meditation, and prayer.”

His ruling passion for retirement, together with his consequent aversion to hurry and bustle, continued strong to the last. Yet he was far from being morose or unsocial in his temper or conduct; but finding that large parties, however select, are seldom productive of spiritual profit to those who compose them, he generally avoided them as much as he conceived to be consistent with performing the duties of social life. Indeed, one of the principal causes of his being so much venerated as well as beloved, was, that he spent little of his time in public, unless when engaged in the performance of the duties attached to his sacred office. Trifling, folly, or nonsense, received no countenance from him; nor was it an easy matter for any to be in his company, attend to his

behaviour, and listen to his conversation, without becoming wiser and better.

Any person of general good sense, who mixes much in various companies, may easily discern that many who read much, make comparatively little progress in knowledge. These, in their perusal of works, seek amusement rather than information. Dr. Robert Saunderson, made Bishop of Lincoln shortly after the Restoration, and who was famous for his knowledge of casuistical Divinity, said, when old, that he had never read much; and that, for his skill in casuistry, he was chiefly indebted to his intimate acquaintance with Cicero's Offices. But though he read comparatively little, he thought much, and hence was eminent in his sacred profession.

That Mr. Benson was far from being a careless or inattentive reader, appears in numberless instances from the observations he made upon the works he perused. Indeed he may be said to have studied such performances as he found worthy of a reading. What attention must he have paid to Dr. Witherspoon, upon the *New Birth*, to be able to give the following account of its contents.

"Dr. Witherspoon makes that change, called the new birth, properly and directly to consist in these two things: 1. That our supreme end be to glorify God, and that our every aim be subordinate to this. 2. That the soul rest in God, as its chief happiness, and habitually prefer his favour to every other enjoyment. Blessed be the Lord, my conscience bears me witness that he has wrought these things in me. He speaks next of the effects of this change, under which head he discourses on the new apprehensions which the person born again has of God; of himself; of the world; of eternity; of Jesus Christ; and of all the ordinances of his appointment. He then shows how the new birth is discovered; 1, by humility; 2, the sanctification of natural and lawful affections; and 3, by the moderation of natural and lawful affections in general, and habitual submission to the will of God.—I found it profitable to examine myself in all these respects, as a means of both humbling me, and establishing my confidence in God."

It is not surprising that a man who read with such purity of intention, and a desire to promote his own edification, as we find expressed in the above extract, became, at an early period of his ministry, a "scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven," and consequently capable of bringing "out of his treasure things new and old."

Of the Conference held at Leeds in August, at which, after a separation of four years, he had the happiness of seeing his invaluable friend Mr. Fletcher, he briefly says: "Aug. 15. Our Conference is now over, and I shall return to the sweetness and comfort of silence and retirement. This hurry does not suit me; it is not good for either my soul or body. However, I have cause to bless God, that I have been pre-

served in health and peace ; and that I have found some of the sermons, especially those preached by Mr. Fletcher, very edifying.”

To such ministers as do not enter into the spirit of their office, but preach upon any subject, whether suitable or not, chiefly because they are well acquainted with it ; the difficulty which Mr. Benson, whose mind was so fraught with various knowledge, frequently found in choosing a text, will appear matter of surprise. But in all probability, the liberty which he found, immediately after his encountering such difficulty, will excite greater astonishment. An instance of both the difficulty and liberty in question, we have under date Aug. 22.

“ This evening I found a great aversion to preach, and would gladly have prevailed on Mr. T. to take the pulpit, but he refused. I could not for some time fix upon a text ; but at length I made choice of Eph. i. 15, &c. The Lord was pleased particularly to assist me, while I pressed the congregation to go on to the enjoyment of the great blessing there prayed for. I showed how needful it was, 1. To know what was the hope of our calling ; that is, what God called us to enjoy on earth, that we might pray without ceasing, and live a life of desire and expectation. 2. To know the riches of his inheritance, &c. that we might rejoice evermore, and in every thing give thanks. 3. To know the exceeding greatness of his power exerted ; 1st, to make, and, 2dly, to keep us spiritually alive, that we may live continually in the spirit of humility and dependence.”

On the afternoon of August 24, Mr. Fletcher and Miss Bosanquet, with most of the select band of the Methodist Society at Leeds, met in a private house. “ Mr. Fletcher,” says Mr. Benson, “ spoke largely of his own experience, and his doing so seemed a great blessing to many. He observed, that on the Wednesday preceding, at Miss Bosanquet’s, he had been enabled to apply the word unto himself, and to reckon himself to be, indeed, dead unto sin. Many spoke of God’s great goodness, and of the influence of his Spirit upon their minds. It was, indeed, a wonderful season. But though I found my soul in peace, and drawn out after God in prayer ; nay, though I found confidence that I was justified, and had faith in the promise of perfect holiness, yet I did not find much joy, nor any particular nearness to God.” By this honest avowal, Mr. Benson will not be lessened in the estimation of those who are best qualified to give an opinion upon the subject of Christian experience.

Often does the Lord suffer several of his ministering servants to be severely tempted and distressed in mind, especially about the time when he accompanies with a special blessing the truths they deliver. By abasing them in their own esteem, he prepares them for the honour which is consequent on their being instruments in his hands of saving souls. By giving them to feel as well as see their own utter insufficiency

to turn so much as one sinner from the error of his ways : he leads them to ascribe to himself, to whom it belongs, the whole glory of all the good that is effected by their ministry. The truth of these observations will be found exemplified by what Mr. Benson, under date September 2, says of his mental exercises and subsequent comfort :

“ I do not know that I slept any last night ; and having three times to preach to-day, I was tempted to fear I should not be able, with any comfort, to get through my work. But O how much better has the Lord been to me than my fears ! All the way as I went, I found my mind exceeding barren, and when I entered the pulpit, I seemed to have neither love nor power ; but, before I had done preaching, my soul was quickened, and my faith strengthened exceedingly, and a confidence was given me that the Lord would bless the people ; which he did in a remarkable manner during the last prayer. In the afternoon, I found liberty in preaching, and likewise at Thorner, in the evening.”

The late Dr. Priestley was noted for the facility with which he renounced one religious creed after another, till at length he sunk into the very dregs of Socinianism. His Theological works, if such they may be styled, are calculated to shake the faith of such believers in Divine Revelation as are neither experimentally acquainted with Christianity, nor well grounded in the evidences, by which its truth and certainty are proved. Still the Doctor was what he termed a *rational* Christian. He would free the Church from vulgar errors ; one of which, according to him, is, that the soul survives the body, or is, indeed, any more than a certain result, arising from a particular organization of matter ; and another, that there is any such being in the universe as a Devil. A man capable of demonstrating with ease, as he supposed he did, that a human soul is mere matter, and that the devil is a creature of fancy, was qualified for engaging in the most absurd undertaking. The following observations were made by Mr. Benson, bearing date September 24, upon an Abstract of the Doctor's Harmony of the Gospels :—

“ By Satan, he understands every where the principle of evil personified, and by all the demoniacs in the Gospels, he understands lunatics. He gives many strange and extravagant expositions of the sacred text, such as it is not easy for any but infidels to believe. What I read produced many reflections in my mind concerning the ignorance and weakness of many, who are capable of admitting the most strange and absurd opinions in matters relating to religion.”

It is highly desirable that all Christians, but Ministers in particular, should, in all their social intercourses, so conduct themselves, as to afford no just cause for falling under their own censure, or that of others. “ Few,” says Young, “ bring back at eve, immaculate, the manners of the morn ;” and, by way of parody upon the observation, it may be said that few, whether private Christians or Ministers, bring back from

a large company, in which they spend several hours together, all the spirituality they carried into it. General knowledge, prudence, great self-command, and good manners, in conjunction with divine grace, are excellent antidotes against the contagion which generally prevails, more or less, in large companies; but they are not always found sufficient to preserve their possessors from, more or less, moral injury, when placed within the reach of such infection. This Mr. Benson proved, when, under date September 24, he says, "This afternoon I was so hurt by an unprofitable visit, that I had not that satisfaction in preaching I often have."

To a man of Mr. Benson's exquisite sensibility, and who always delivered the word of truth with an earnest desire to promote the spiritual interests of all whom he addressed, an apprehension that, upon any occasion, he preached to little or no valuable purpose, was exceedingly painful. This was particularly the case with him on the 25th of November.

"This," he observes, "has been one of the most uncomfortable Sabbaths I have had for a long time past. I have been afflicted in body, and much dejected in mind, and had no comfort in preaching. I know not when I was so stripped of all ability to speak to any purpose as at Seacroft; and, in addition to this, what I said seemed to have no influence upon the minds of the hearers. At Thorner, in the evening, I was favoured with some liberty. After the labours of the day, I rode home exceedingly dejected, and full of self-accusations." How strange must this account appear to such Ministers as never felt, in any degree, what St. Paul meant when he said, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth, till Christ be formed in you;" or when his language was, "Now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord."

Mr. Benson, who, in the proper constitutional sense of the word, was a patriot, in common with the best-informed lovers of their King and country, felt exquisitely when victory declared in favour of the British Colonies in America. With many other great and good men, he was apprehensive that the independence of those Colonies would be exceedingly injurious, if not fatal, to the interests of Great Britain. But he lived sufficiently long to see his beloved country, after having surmounted unparalleled difficulties, placed at the head of the first nations of the globe. How exceedingly little can the wisest and best men see into futurity! How gloomy were his views when, on the 29th of November, he expressed himself as follows:—

"This morning I was much affected by hearing a letter from London read, containing very disagreeable intelligence. If this news be true, America is, indeed, lost to us! I found a deep concern all the day for the welfare of the nation, and power to spread our distracted situation before the Lord." Resuming this unpleasant subject on the 30th of

November, he says, "This morning I was grieved that the above-mentioned intelligence is but too true; Cornwallis and his whole army, amounting to upwards of 7000, being taken prisoners in Virginia. This intelligence so affected me, that I could sleep but little all night. O God, look upon and pity this guilty land!"

It is common with several professors of piety to censure those who address them from the pulpit, as defective in talents or a devotional spirit, whenever they hear them without experiencing an accession of comfort. In this they err egregiously; for, were an Apostle to address them, their being profited would, in a secondary sense, depend upon their mixing faith with the truths delivered by him. Mr. Fletcher, who always preached under, more or less of the divine influence, was not heard, upon all occasions, with equal pleasure or profit, by the most intelligent and devout of his auditors. Mr. Benson, equally distinguished for his knowledge in divinity, and a strong devotional spirit, on the 5th of December, says, "Mr. Fletcher, in his sermon here, recommended to us to walk in the steps of the faith of Abraham; but his word was not *to me* attended with so much power as I have often felt it." In making this observation, Mr. Benson was far from censuring Mr. Fletcher, in whose company he spent the evening of the next day with pleasure and profit.

All the truly pious endeavour to pray every where, "without wrath and doubting;" and hence receive from God fresh supplies of grace to assist them to proceed in the path of holiness; but he sometimes favours them with special times of refreshing. With such a time Mr. Benson was favoured on the 17th of December. "This forenoon," says he, "my soul was greatly led out to praise the Lord for his goodness to myself and family, and to cry to him that I might be enabled to walk worthy of his many and undeserved favours to me and mine. My soul longed to be wholly conformed to his image, and to live to his glory; but I saw myself very short of what I ought to be, which made me sink, as it were, into nothing before him, and prostrate myself in his presence."

Having preached twice on the 30th of December, and joined, at Yeaden, with the society in renewing his covenant with God, Mr. Benson retired for the purpose of devoting some time to prayer and meditation. In the performance of these important duties his soul was deeply humbled. "The Lord," he observes, "gave me to bewail my past sins and unfruitfulness, and to cry to him for grace, that I might spend the ensuing year more to his glory than any I had hitherto lived. I found my soul drawn out to praise the Lord for his many mercies, and to beg a continuance of them to myself and family."

Of the 31st of December Mr. Benson briefly says: "This being the last day of the old year, we concluded it with a watch-night. Mr. M——

preached on Rom. xii. 1. I found a sense of the Divine goodness, and a strong desire to dedicate myself to the Lord. We continued the meeting till twelve o'clock, when, after introducing the new year with a suitable hymn, we separated."

A part of the 8th of January and the two following days, Mr. Benson spent in reading some of Bishop Saunderson's works. His sermon on "Every Creature of God is good," Mr. Benson found to be particularly edifying. He adds, "I see I have been very deficient in point of thankfulness to God for his many good gifts. The Lord has given me a strong desire to be more sensible of his mercies for the future, and more thankful for them. On the 10th, he read another sermon written by the same excellent author, on "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin," and a Tract on "Comparative Theology." Of the latter of those performances, Mr. Benson observes, "The author shows the comparative excellence of the different parts of religion, as they stand related to each other; as also how the love of God and our neighbour is the end of all; and that every part is more or less valuable as it is more or less calculated to promote this end. Some things, as faith, repentance, self-denial, &c., are directly necessary in order to this, and also sure and infallible, never failing to produce this effect; others are necessary, but not infallible."—Mr. Benson adds, "Upon the whole, it is a useful tract, and well worthy of serious attention."

It appears that upon the 28th of January, Mr. Benson read with meditation and prayer two practical cases of conscience judiciously resolved by Joseph Alleine; the first, "What do ye more than others?" and the second, "What a man must do that he may please God?" "I found," says he, "great cause to be humbled, particularly with respect to two things: 1. That I had not sufficiently desired and sought the good of those that hated me and sought my hurt; and 2, That I had not been merciful enough to the failings of others, and severe to my own. In other respects, I felt cause for thankfulness, that I found the following marks in me as infallible signs of true Christianity: 1. Having respect to all God's commandments: 2. Giving up all to Christ without reserve; 3. Making religion my business; 4. Valuing the work of religion more than its wages; 5. Aiming at constant self-denial; 6. Aiming at the height of religion; 7. Regarding sanctification as much as justification and salvation by Christ; and 8, Setting up Christ as my highest end, even above self."

How eminently holy must the man have been who read thus devotionally! And how evidently does it appear, that notwithstanding his sincerity, faith, zeal, and diligence in the service of his Divine Master; he always found it absolutely necessary, in order to his indulging any hope of heaven, to cast himself upon the boundless mercy of God through the merits of Jesus Christ?

For the unspeakable blessings of civil and religious liberty which the inhabitants of this country have long enjoyed, we cannot be sufficiently thankful. Infidel theories of the origin of all free governments would, if generally attempted to be reduced to practice, eventually introduce universal despotism; for anarchy, which is a necessary consequence of acting upon what may be termed the *abstract* rights of man, cannot in the nature of things, be of long duration; nor does it ever fail to be destructive of civil liberty. The French Revolution, which for a time dazzled the eyes of the great mass of the civilized world, and confidently prophesied the near approach of a civil and religious millennium, was accompanied by such acts of barbarity, as seldom, if ever before, had stained the annals of any civilized nation. A military despotism, with all its degrading evils, proved freedom to the French, in comparison of the abominable tyranny and consequent indiscriminate slaughter, which were the fruit of an attempt to reduce to practice an infidel theory of civil government.

How grateful Mr. Benson was for civil and religious liberty, will appear from what he says under date March 2. "In the morning, I was much edified by reading the Life of Fox, author of 'The Acts and Monuments of the Christian Martyrs;' and in the evening an extract of his account of the Martyrs in the three first centuries. I was quite ashamed that I should have ever considered as hard, any of the little tribulations I have passed through; or that I should ever have felt any temper contrary to resignation. I was ashamed that I was not more thankful for the sweet and blessed peace and liberty we enjoy in this country, and careful to improve them to the glory of God."

At Woodlesford, a village near Leeds, Mr. Benson, on the 13th of March, read and made some remarks on a Manuscript copy of a piece upon liberty. "O how dry is it," he remarks, "in comparison of Arndt's True Christianity, which I have been reading in the morning! The author attempts to show that liberty consists in *voluntariness*, and that we are said to be free when we act from choice, whether we could choose otherwise or not."—This is in effect an argument used by President Edwards, to prove that men, whom he maintains to be necessary agents, are accountable for their conduct. That the holy angels, whom we conceive to be confirmed in a state of bliss beyond the possibility of choosing evil, freely serve God, we readily admit; but we do not conceive that any man is warranted in confounding the liberty of those blessed intelligences, whose period of trial is at an end, with that liberty of choice, without which it is impossible to conceive how any being can, with the colour of truth, be said to be placed in a state of probation.

Even so late as the year 1782, the best circuits in England were more laborious, and in other respects more disagreeable, than the generality of

the worst are at present, or have been for several years past. No such provision was then made for superannuated preachers, or the widows of those who died in the work, as is now made: hence, it is not matter of surprise, that even Mr. Benson himself, one of the most excellent men that ever laboured amongst the Methodists, should have entertained some thoughts, not of ceasing to preach,—for an idea of that sort he never entertained,—but of establishing a boarding-school, the probable profits arising from which, he might justly suppose, would be sufficient to maintain himself and family, in a state of respectability. In no case, through the history of his eminently holy and useful life, do his piety and judgment appear to more advantage, than in the account he gives of his reasonings upon the subject, and the motives which induced him to continue an itinerant preacher.

That account is dated Pomfret, April 17. “I spent a great part of the forenoon in prayer, as for other things, so especially for direction, whether I should set up a boarding-school or continue to travel. After much prayer and consideration, it seemed clearly to be my duty to continue to travel, at least till my family be so large, if it ever should be, as to render it very troublesome to remove from place to place. This appeared to be my duty, 1st, Because the Scripture directs every man to abide in his calling, unless there be some good and sufficient reason for leaving it; and if *every man*, then much more a Minister, whose calling is the most useful and important of any, and ought not to be relinquished without a manifest necessity, not only not altogether, which I had no thought of doing, but not in any degree. 2dly, Because it is probable it will be better for the souls of both myself and my wife to abide as we are, than to encumber ourselves with the care of a boarding-school. And 3dly, and especially, It is not probable I shall be as useful in any other situation whatever, as this in which I am at present. For these reasons, I found my mind quite determined to pursue my present plan, at least till there should appear a greater reason for leaving it than yet subsists. But had I not been determined, the following providential occurrence would undoubtedly have determined me.”

What he here alludes to was the death of an infant daughter, who lived no more than ten days and a few hours. “I found,” says he, “a desire for her living, and yet was resigned to part with her, from a conviction that she had not been born, nor would she die, in vain, but would glorify God in a better world. I knew that if she lived, she would be to us a certain care, and a very uncertain comfort; that if she died now she would glorify God in that kingdom which is made up of little children, and such as have obtained a similar disposition. I therefore gave her up to God; and, blessed be his name, my wife was enabled to follow my example.” These just and pious reflections are worthy the attention of such parents as survive their infant offspring.

For many years previous to Mr. Wesley's death, wherever he visited, but especially in the country, he was heard by multitudes; and many persons of respectability from various parts were eager to be in his company as much as possible; and several of those who entertained him at their houses manifested such hospitality to their and his numerous friends as was highly to their credit. But, however suited to the taste of many, such entertainments might be, they did not suit Mr. Benson, whose retired habits led him to delight in solitude. Hence his account of a visit paid by Mr. Wesley to his friends at Leeds on the 6th of May. "Yesterday, and to-day, Mr. Wesley has been with us. I have heard him preach night and morning with satisfaction; but I never find these times of hurry and bustle profitable, they are rather distracting to my mind; silence and retirement are best for me. O, that I could die more to men and things, and live wholly to the Lord!"

That Mr. Benson was a severe casuist in every thing that related to his inward and outward walk with God, appears from the manner in which he censures himself for things which too many in the professing world would look upon as so many innocent infirmities. Instances of the severity in question occur under date the 8th and 10th of May. On the 8th, he says, "Having given way a little to a wrong temper, I have not been comfortable in my mind this afternoon." And on the 10th, "To-day again my mind has been hurt by some little things, and I have indulged an unkind temper. When shall I be meek and lowly in heart! When shall I learn patience by what I suffer!"

For three days preceding the 15th of June, Mr. Benson had been afflicted with a complaint generally prevalent at that time, supposed to be an effect of cold in consequence of an uncommonly wet season. On one of those days, he says, "I was full of pain from head to foot, and oppressed with such a general lassitude as to be hardly able to move, and yet not able to lie two minutes in one posture; but, I bless the Lord, I was much better on the following morning." Then, after mentioning, on the next day, that his servant had been ill of the same complaint, he adds, in his wonted manner of acknowledging the wisdom and goodness of Divine Providence, "How kindly does the Lord deal with us, not afflicting us all at once, but leaving one to attend the rest!"

Having devoted the greater part of the 19th and 20th of June to the reading of Church History, he says, "Alas! what wickedness and villany were committed under the garb of religion! And yet amidst the general corruption, the Lord had his secret ones in every age, who were generally persecuted. What I have now read has furnished me with matter for serious reflection."

In reading, on the 27th of June, a relation of the sufferings of the Protestants in France, he was much affected. "O!" he observes, "how much more Christian blood has been shed by Christians, (so called,)

than by heathens themselves! How has Papal Rome exceeded Pagan Rome in slaughtering God's people. O, my God, what awful scenes the day of judgment will lay open!"

The tolerant spirit which now pervades all Protestant countries, and which has made some progress in a few Popish states, was unknown for many ages in the Christian world. From the time that Constantine the Great declared Christianity to be the religion of the Roman Empire, till the Act of Toleration was passed in this country, civil and ecclesiastical laws were so blended in all Christian countries, that penalties were inflicted by the civil power, as a matter of course, upon the violaters of the latter as well as of the former description of laws. To the Reformation, under God, we are indebted for both civil and religious liberty; for had Popery continued to be the religion of this country, we should not be favoured with either the one or the other. In what Roman Catholics account matters of faith, one of which is transubstantiation, their church never tolerates the right of private judgment.

The custom of coming too late to places of public worship, has been often and justly censured; but after all, it is to be feared that it is as prevalent as ever. Setting a light estimate upon the solemnities and decencies of public worship is taking a large stride towards bringing religion into contempt; and, in the meantime, discovers that many, who have not wholly laid aside the profession of Christianity, are either grossly ignorant of its doctrines and precepts, or utterly regardless of their own spiritual interests. The wretched custom in question Mr. Benson notices an instance of on July 7. "At noon I was much grieved to see the greatest part of the congregation come late, both for their own sakes, and because they disturbed the attention of others. I spoke very plainly to them and warned them of the danger they seemed to be in of despising, or neglecting the word of God; and applied very closely the subject I had discoursed upon."

It is highly desirable, not only for the comfort of a minister, while preaching, but for the better edification of those whom he addresses, that nothing should occur in a congregation, capable of diverting his attention from the subject of his discourse. With what comfort could some of the French Protestant Ministers in Holland preach to a congregation, in which, during the time of divine worship, some present,—*hearers* they ought not to be called—were engaged in perusing News-papers. This was actually the case many years before the French Revolution. Such a profanation of Divine worship has perhaps never been witnessed in England. But how often, during the time of sermon, are the eyes, and consequently the attention of the hearers, attracted by individuals who do not make their appearance previous to its commencement. Such disorderly persons, not being in sufficient time to observe the connection of a sermon, and not considering how much, in a well laid-out discourse,

the various parts depend upon, and elucidate each other; are apt to single out a few passages, the meaning of which they do not understand, as matter for their censure, and pronounce a preacher weak or enthusiastic, the talents and sobriety of whom are unquestionable. We may easily suppose, that had such injudicious characters heard, upon some occasions, no more of Mr. Benson's sermons than his powerful applications, in which the thunder of his eloquence, accompanied by the power of God, was most sensibly felt; they would have pronounced him an enthusiast. But let us hear himself, not upon the power of his eloquence; for of that he was far from thinking highly; but of what he felt by the uncommonly late attendance of some on the 15th of July.

"In the evening, I explained how true Christians are the Epistle of Christ, and how we become such: I had much liberty in speaking, till near the conclusion, when several well-dressed strangers, who came in, disconcerted me a little, through a fear, that as they had not heard the explanation of the text, the application of it would appear nonsense to them: and I was exceedingly burdened with care lest by their coming in so late, instead of receiving any profit, they should be prejudiced against the truth." This is the language of a man who, with St. Paul, felt himself to be a debtor to the Greeks and to the Barbarians; and who, of course, wished every stumbling-block to be removed out of the way of all who came under the sound of the Gospel.

Having on the 31st of July finished Wesley's Abridgment of Mosheim's History of the Church, Mr. Benson says, "I have read it with much pleasure, and found many parts of it very profitable. But, alas! the true church, the company of the faithful, who truly loved and feared God, has in all ages been comparatively few." That Mr. Wesley's Church History is not a popular one, is a proof that its worth is but very partially known; for though confessedly an abridgment, it is in several places an improvement of Mosheim's work, and such an one as would not fail, in general, to obtain the approbation of competent judges.

An instance of Mr. Benson's readiness to become all things to all men, we find an account of, under date August 2. "I preached abroad to a large congregation at Hunslet Carr, and had liberty of speech, while I warned them to fear lest a promise being left them of entering into rest, they should seem to come short of it. The people heard with attention, and I trust not in vain. Some Calvinists were present, whom I wished not to offend; and, therefore, I did not say many things which I otherwise might have said. However, I insisted that the door of salvation was open before them all, that they were at liberty to enter in, and that if they did not, they had none but themselves to blame."

In every few pages of Mr. Benson's journal, we discover proofs, that instead of copying himself in his public ministrations, he took special

pains to lead his hearers through numberless parts of the infinite field of truth, and hence afforded them such pleasing and profitable variety as was equally calculated to promote their spiritual and mental improvement.

Having faithfully laboured in the Leeds Circuit for two years, he was, in August, appointed, in conjunction with Mr. Bradburn and Mitchell, to the Bradford Circuit. The preceding year he had for his colleagues Mr. A. Mather and Hopper; men justly and highly respected for their talents, piety, and faithful labours in their Lord's harvest.

Mr. Christopher Hopper, one of Mr. Benson's early and most affectionate friends, was born in the Parish of Ryton, in the county of Durham, on the 25th of December, 1722. In early youth he frequently felt remorse on account of such parts of his conduct as he conceived to be opposed to the divine will; but after a time, breaking through all restraint, he became notoriously immoral. Some time in the year 1742, he had an opportunity of hearing the Rev. Charles Wesley in the open air. "When," says he, "I saw a man in a clergyman's habit, preaching at a public Cross, to a large auditory, some gaping, some laughing, and some weeping; I wondered what this could mean. When he had concluded, some said, He is a good man, and is sent to reform our land: others said, Nay, he is come to pervert us, and we ought to stone him out of our coasts. I said, If he is a good man, he will do good; but if he is an impostor, he can only leave us as he found us, that is, without hope and without God in the world."

In the year 1743, he occasionally heard some of the Methodist preachers; but though few, if any of the truths they delivered, were opposed by him, yet he determined not to become a member of their Society. "I will read my Bible," says he, "say my prayers; go to my parish church; reform my life; and be good and pious, without the scandal of the cross."

At this time, though in some degree under divine influence, he had no clear views of his guilt and helplessness; his mouth was not stopped from a consciousness of his having, by acting under the influence of the carnal mind, in substance violated the whole of the divine law; nor was the language of his heart, "God be merciful to me a sinner." But he did not long go about to establish his own righteousness, as the ground of his acceptance with God; for under a sermon preached by Mr. Reeves, he says, "My mouth was stopped; I stood guilty before God; my stout heart melted; and I trembled at the word." It appears that shortly after his being thoroughly humbled, he was enabled so to believe in Christ as to experience a sense of pardon. After having met a class, and often preached that Gospel which he had proved to be the power of God unto salvation, he, in the year 1749, without knowing how he should be provided for, gave himself up wholly to the work of the minis-

try. His own account of this eventful era of his life is highly interesting, "My little substance," he observes, "soon failed, and I saw nothing before me but beggary and affliction. Sometimes I was carried above all earthly objects, and had a comfortable view of the heavenly country. At other times I was much cast down, and I could see nothing before me but poverty and distress. I well remember, once on the top of a cold mountain, in a violent storm of snow, when the congealed flakes covered me with a white mantle, Satan assaulted me, and pushed me hard to return to my school, or engage in some other business, to procure bread. I staggered through unbelief, and almost yielded to the tempter. But as the attack was sudden, so the battle was soon over. The Lord sent these words to my heart like lightning, 'When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? and they said, Nothing.' (Luke xxii. 35.) I answered, with a loud voice, 'Nothing, Lord! Nothing, Lord!' All my doubts and fears vanished in a moment, and I went on my way rejoicing." "Since that time," adds Mr. Hopper, in 1780, "I have been richly supplied with all good things."

"In those days," he remarks, "we had no provision for preachers' wives; no funds; no stewards. He that had a staff might take it, go without it, or stay at home."

Mr. Hopper's piety, talents, prudence, and zeal, were such as qualified him, through the divine blessing, for eminent usefulness. During the space of forty years he continued a travelling preacher; and with apostolic intrepidity, patience, and meekness, surmounted difficulties far greater than any Methodist Preacher, either abroad or at home, has now to encounter. Afterwards, when in consequence of the increasing infirmities of age, he settled at Bolton, in Lancashire, as a superannuated preacher, instead of giving himself up to "ignoble sloth," he continued to read and study with so much care and diligence, that he retained to the end of life both the spirit and gift of preaching, with little, if any diminution. After having preached the Gospel for fifty-seven years, he was called to endure strong pain for many weeks previous to his death, in consequence of one of his shoulders being dislocated. In the eightieth year of his age, he died with that holy joy and humble confidence in the mercy of God, through Jesus Christ, which became a minister of the Gospel, who had so long unfurled the banner of the Cross, and so often emphatically said, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

On August 15, Mr. Benson took leave of his friends at Leeds, by preaching from 1 Cor. xiii. 13; a passage from which we learn, that faith, hope, and love, three graces which are inseparably connected with all others, are found in all the living members of Christ's mystical body.

Mr. and Mrs. Benson, previous to their going to Bradford, spent some time at Scarborough. On their way thither, Mr. Benson preached at

Tadcaster, and Malton. In the former of these places, it being the time of the York races, he strongly warned the congregation against such sinful and cruel amusements. On the 20th of August, he preached at Scarborough on 1 John v. 11, 12. After mentioning this, he, with the ardour which led him to exert himself, wherever situated, for the purpose of spreading the savour of the knowledge of Christ, adds, "O that my coming to this place may prove a blessing to some souls!" He preached at Whitby to a large congregation on the 22d, from Heb. xi. 7. In explaining and enforcing this passage, he says that he was favoured with liberty, and that he trusts the word was made a blessing to many. After his return to Scarborough, he embraced an opportunity of hearing Mr. Bottomly, a candid and able minister of a Dissenting chapel in that town. "I heard him," says he, "with pleasure." How trifling in the estimation of such men as Mr. Benson and Bottomly, are those matters of opinion and modes of church government, on which too many lay out their strength, at the expense of neglecting, more or less, justice, mercy, and the love of God!

Having left Scarborough, on the 28th of August, Mr. and Mrs. Benson proceeded to Bridlington Quay, where they were most cordially received by Captain Robinson. On that and the two following evenings, Mr. Benson preached at the Quay; under the last of those sermons many were much affected.

Arrived at Hull on the 31st of August, he had the pleasure of an interview with the Rev. Mr. Milner, Barker, and Garwood. "Our conversation," says he, "was friendly and profitable." One of these Rev. Gentlemen, Mr. Milner, is justly famed for his piety, learning, faithfulness in the work of the ministry, and for his excellent Church History. This work he did not live to complete; that task devolved upon, and was well executed by, his learned and pious brother, the late Dean of Carlisle, and Master of Queen's College, Cambridge.

After preaching twice at Hull, on the 1st of September, and on the 3d at Beverley, he returned to Bridlington Quay, where he had left Mrs. Benson during his late excursion. "My wife and I," says he, "kneeled down and praised the Lord for his mercies, and begged for grace to walk more humbly and watchfully with him."

Some part of the 6th and 7th of September, Mr. Benson spent in perusing Saurin's Sermons on the Attributes of God, especially his existence, eternity, omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence. He briefly observes, "These subjects he treats admirably well, with great depth of penetration, and clearness of method; his style, as far as one can judge from a translation, is pure and easy, and the whole composition, above the common class of writers. By what I have read of him I have been much edified."

After having preached at several places on his way, Mr. Benson, accompanied by Mrs. Benson, arrived in safety at Bradford, on the 13th of September, where he preached in the evening from 2 Cor. iii. 5, 6, and remarks, "From these words, I warned the congregation against four things. 1. Against depending upon us for help. 2. Against despairing of help from God. 3. Against mistaking the nature of our office as 'ministers of the covenant.' 4. Against resting in the literal knowledge of all this, and stopping short of experience."

However well a Minister may be acquainted with Scripture Theology, he ought generally to make choice of his subject some considerable time previous to his ascending the pulpit. For neglecting to do this on the 17th of September, Mr. Benson censures himself. His thoughts upon this subject merit attention. "This evening I had many hearers; but for want of having fixed upon a subject beforehand, I was distracted in my mind, and did not speak with such comfort as I am in the habit of doing. It is generally best with me, when I can fix, at least an hour before, on what to preach from; then, by meditation and prayer, I get the subject impressed upon my mind, and entering into the spirit of it, I am able to treat it with more clearness and power."

After spending the principal part of the 27th and the 28th of September in reading the Hebrew Bible, and comparing it with the English translation and the Vulgate; he says, "On comparison, I find the English much more agreeable to the original in general, though there may be some exceptions."

Many Protestants of the present age, not satisfied with never setting a single day apart for the purpose of humbling themselves before God by fasting or abstinence, ridicule those who do, as superstitious characters. The Fathers of the Church of England, who knew well how to distinguish betwixt Popish superstitions and genuine Christianity, thought and acted differently. And the old Nonconformists, many of whom were patterns of every Christian virtue, were in the habit of keeping days of humiliation. Mr. Benson manifested his approbation of that practice, by setting apart Friday, October 4, for the purpose of seeking the Lord by prayer and fasting. "And blessed be his name," he observes, "I did not seek him in vain. He drew my heart out in thankfulness to him for many mercies spiritual and temporal; and while I saw myself utterly unworthy of the smallest favour, and was deeply humbled before him, my soul praised him with joyful lips. O how I longed to live to his glory, and to be filled with his Spirit?"

Having finished the reading of Sheridan's Letters on Elocution, about the middle of November, Mr. Benson speaks highly of them. After allowing that every thing Sheridan says on articulation, accent, emphasis, tone, gesture, &c. is much to the purpose, he adds, "But, blessed be

God, one may move and persuade without all these accomplishments, however desirable.”—There is unquestionably no danger of going to an extreme, in *true* oratory; but it must be acknowledged, that when we have said all in its favour which truth will admit, we may as reasonably expect sinners to be awakened by the sound of an organ, as by eloquence the most finished, if not accompanied by “the demonstration of the Spirit.” How many sinners have been turned from darkness to light, by men who never made any pretensions to eloquence! And how many who have been famed for their orations, have never been instrumental in turning so much as one sinner from the evil of his doings!

On the 3d of December, Mr. Benson paid a visit to his friends at Leeds, who had been so often blessed under his ministry. After having preached there, he says, “Blessed be God, I have not stayed at Leeds over to-night in vain. The Lord has been pleased to give me great freedom in preaching. The congregation, which was large, was in general much affected; and one woman appeared to be thoroughly awakened. I conversed a little with her in the vestry, and appointed her to meet me in the morning.” This woman, according to appointment, met Mr. Benson. She came from the country. Her father, who was a man of piety, had often spoken to her, but in vain, upon the subject of religion. She had been in the habit of hearing the Gospel preached; but to no valuable purpose. “The Lord,” says Mr. Benson, “was pleased, whilst she was under the word, so to awaken her, that she was distressed beyond measure, and she resolved to give herself up to God, and join the society without delay.”

Having returned to Bradford, on the 6th of December, Mr. Benson preached at a place called Great Horton, where the congregation was very small, in comparison of what it had been five years before.

Three causes frequently conspire to lessen the number of hearers. 1. Some, by sinning against light, and thus steeling their hearts against conviction, become hardened in sin, and hence lose all relish for the salutary, but to them painful truths, delivered by every faithful Minister of Christ. 2. The immoral conduct of persons in church fellowship, especially if they fill important offices in a Church or religious Society, or have been remarkable for making extraordinary professions of piety. 3. The absence of love amongst professors, with its desolating concomitants, “evil-surmisings, guile, envies, evil-speaking, tale-bearing, wrath, strife, and emulations.” All these causes, in some places, combine to lessen congregations; nor can much hope be ordinarily entertained of their being much increased, until the old hardened sinners, who were never awakened, together with the unsound professors, are swept from the earth with the besom of destruction. After this event, a new generation having arisen, many individuals of it will gratefully accept that grace which was spurned by their predecessors.

The former part of the 9th of January, 1783, Mr. Benson devoted to reading, writing, and prayer. In the evening he preached on the Barren Fig-Tree, a subject uncommonly awful, from which he no doubt delivered truths of a most awakening nature. At this time, he says, "To-day, I finished the Hebrew Bible again; and I resolve to spend a little time every morning when at home in reading it, as I find it a very profitably study."

Mr. Benson mentions his having been much comforted while engaged, on the morning of the 17th of January, in reading and prayer. He spent most of the forenoon in conversation with his friend Mr. Hopper. Afterwards he dined at Mr. —'s, in company with Mr. Cross and Valton. Mr. Cross, a man of eminent piety and true Christian simplicity, was for many years Vicar of Bradford, where his holy life and faithful ministerial labours were blessed to the profit of many. In him orthodoxy and charity were so blended, that the most penetrating could scarcely discover in which of the two he excelled.

At Halifax, on Feb. 2, Mr. Benson, who never kept back any thing profitable from his hearers, on learning that many of the society there seldom went to the sacrament, preached upon the subject.

A part of the 4th of February, he devoted to the perusal of Xenophon's Life of Socrates. Had it not been for that historian and Plato, how little should we know of Socrates, who is supposed to be the father of moral philosophy. "How certainly," says Mr. Benson, "did he die a martyr to the truth."

Some persons, not sufficiently acquainted with Mr. Benson, may possibly attribute his extraordinary diligence in the work of the ministry chiefly to habit. That habit rendered it comparatively easy to him is most unquestionable; but it must not be forgotten that he acquired that habit by steadily acting upon principle. Learned leisure would have been to him delightful; but of this he was willing to deny himself, in order to be more abundant in labours. Never did he countenance such a suggestion as, "Spare thyself;" but on the contrary, by motives drawn from the word of God, urged himself to greater exertions.

Having, on the 3d of March, an opportunity of spending an hour with a Minister whom he found comfortably situated, and who had abundance of leisure for reading and study, he says, "I should have been tempted to envy him, had I not been persuaded that the great end of life is to do good, and not to enjoy one's ease and quiet. O, my Lord, let me always be willing to be a stranger and a pilgrim upon the earth, and go about doing good!"

The custom of lengthening out social visits to the extent of four or five hours, is generally found inimical to a growth in holiness. When we find such a man as Mr. Benson, in whose presence it was difficult to be trifling or foolish, censure himself for unwatchfulness in conversation,

with what caution ought the generality of Christians to conduct themselves in all their friendly and social intercourses ! The censure now referred to, occurs under date March 24, "I fear I have not spent this day as profitably as I might have done. I see it is not easy for me to be much in company and be either useful to others, or profited myself. O, that I could be more watchful, and more intent upon improving conversation !"

Being upon a visit at Leeds, on the 9th of April, he preached there in the evening to a large congregation. That he preached well we cannot doubt; but he did not think so himself, for he remarks, "I was far from being satisfied with my discourse. I fear I had offended God, by having it too much at heart to preach well."

Without supposing that Mr. Benson's censure in this case was well founded, it may be proper to observe that anxiety to excel in either preaching or conversation, rarely fails to defeat the purpose it was designed to promote. Preachers of great nervous sensibility are frequently grieved on account of such trifling inaccuracies in their discourses, as none but the more intelligent of their hearers, who can easily account for them, are capable of discerning. Auditors of sense and candour, who know how difficult it is even to write correctly, will make due allowances for such defects as are generally found in the best extemporary sermons.

About this time, Mr. Benson paid a visit to his friends at Manchester, Stockport, Oldham, Delph, and Middleton; at all of which places he was received with the most cordial affection. Returned to his circuit early in May, he entered upon his labours in it, if possible, with increased vigour. Deriving strength from the Lord God Omnipotent, he proceeded in his holy career of usefulness. At Eccleshill, on the 13th, he says, "I spent some time in prayer, and my soul panted after the divine likeness. O, what an amiable and admirable thing it appeared to me to be holy ! I found it sweet to recount the Lord's mercies, and to praise him for them all, and particularly for calling me to the high and holy office of preaching his Gospel, and for giving me to see some fruit of my labours. I cried unto the Lord for a larger portion of his Spirit, and was not without hope that I should see better days. I felt myself perfectly contented with my situation and circumstances, and truly thankful that the Lord had given me neither poverty nor riches. I prayed that he would continue his loving-kindness to me, and keep me disengaged from all below."

As Mr. Benson lived in the spirit and practice of the important duty of prayer, it is not matter of surprise, that in general the power of God attended his ministrations. And yet he censures himself as defective in the performance of that duty. On the 16th of May he thus expresses himself, "My soul has by no means been so comfortable as it was on

Monday and Tuesday last ; chiefly, I believe, because I did not give myself enough to prayer."

All who are acquainted with the nature of inward religion, and not ignorant of Satan's devices, know, that in order to have a conscience void of offence, they must watch and pray always. How many, shortly after their having experienced strong consolation, have, by being off their guard, grieved the Holy Spirit, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows ! On the 3d of June, Mr. Benson says, "Blessed be the Lord, I have enjoyed great peace of mind, and been favoured with much nearness to him this day." Having thus expressed himself, he adds, "But, alas ! in the afternoon I spoke my thoughts concerning a person too unguardedly, and I was afterwards grieved, lest I should have hurt the minds of some present."

How many *professors* of piety make no scruple of being habitually guilty of the fault now mentioned, which created in Mr. Benson so much uneasiness ! When will the professing world at large keep at as great a distance from injuring their neighbour's character, as they do from wounding his person !

On the 20th of June, Mr. Benson having finished reading Xenophon's Life of Socrates, observes, "I have read the whole book with pleasure and profit. It however pained me to find in Socrates, amidst all his good qualities, an appearance of great pride ; speaking of himself, even before his judges, as the wisest and best man upon earth. Were it not for this, I should admire him as the best heathen that ever lived."

It is well known that the Rev. George Whitefield, though one of the most celebrated and useful preachers in the world, did not excel as an author. To do this, whatever talents he may have possessed for the purpose, required abundantly more time than he could possibly spare from the public and private labours in which he conceived it his duty to be engaged. But though he had not leisure sufficient for producing what may be termed any finished compositions ; yet his works, the whole of which prove he was a man of sense, and truly evangelical, and breathe throughout the spirit of a man of God ardently athirst for the salvation of sinners. These are the excellencies which led Mr. Benson to speak as follows of a part of his productions. "Some of Mr. Whitefield's sermons, especially one termed, 'Persecution the Lot of every Christian,' and another on 'Abraham offering up his son Isaac,' afforded me much matter for useful meditation."

None who are not truly devoted to God, nay, who do not enjoy a large portion of the mind which was in Christ, are apt to devote any considerable portion of time, however much of it may be at their command, to the important duty of private prayer. Admitting this to be a just observation, how much of the mind of Christ must Mr. Benson have possessed, when on the 24th of June, he says, "I spent most of the fore-

noon in prayer for myself, family, relations, and the church of God ; and I found it good to wait upon the Lord."

To such a man as Mr. Benson, who lived in the region of intellect, and who knew how to set a high estimate upon every moment of time, the appearance of a multitude assembled for the purpose of consuming time, was far from affording pleasure. Such an assembly he saw on the 28th of July. "In the evening I rode to Shipley, and was much surprised to find such a multitude assembled there from all parts, at what they call a feast. But they seemed to have nothing at all to do, unless to buy gingerbread, and look at one another. Such a silly, unmeaning assembly I never saw before. O, how little do such know of the worth of time!"

Some professors of inward religion say that they derive little or no edification from practical preaching, however closely connected with evangelical principles. The moral taste of such hearers is strangely vitiated ; and, in order to be consistent with themselves, they must censure our Lord himself, together with all the inspired writers. Mr. Benson, who well knew how to lay the foundation and raise the superstructure of pure religion, preached on the 25th of August, from Titus iii. 8, when he observes, "Both myself and the congregation, I believe, found we had great cause to be humbled, because we had not abounded more in good works."

It is a trite, but just observation, that discourses felt by those who deliver them are calculated to reach the hearts of the auditors. Truths of the most animating nature, coming from the lips of a man on whose heart they make no impression, are listened to with indifference by the generality of hearers. Men who are not alive to eternal realities, and eagerly athirst for the salvation of souls, whatever may be their natural or acquired abilities, and however orthodox their creed ; do not feel the force of Divine subjects, and consequently, in discussing them, are incapable of reaching the hearts of those whom they address.

Under date August 31, Mr. Benson very judiciously touches upon this subject. "Many were much affected at Elland, though my subject was good works ; but I felt the importance of the subject myself, and pressed it warmly upon others, and therefore, as it came from the heart it reached the heart. And I have often observed, it matters not what our subject is, however much calculated to effect the hearers, *they* will not feel it, if *we* do not ; and on the other hand, let it be ever so unlikely to affect them, they will be touched by it, if *we* ourselves are. The manner, therefore, of preaching, as well as the matter, is of great importance."

After preaching several times in the course of Sept. 14, Mr. Benson retired and read with prayer the first six chapters of St. Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians, in the Greek Testament. Having done this

after the labours of the day, did he look upon himself with complacency, or, Pharisee-like, bless God that he was not as other men ! Quite the reverse ; for he says, “ I found I had infinite cause to be ashamed of myself, that after so many years’ profession I was at such a distance from the spirit and conduct of the Apostle ; so wanting in love to Christ and the souls of men, and doing so little to save sinners.”

He employed most of the forenoon of the following day in reading and meditating upon the rest of the above-mentioned Epistle. “ I think,” says he, “ I never understood it so well, nor relished it so much before. It is indeed in all respects an admirable Epistle. It breathes, from the beginning to the end, the most earnest concern for their welfare to whom it was written ; and it is most admirably constructed in all its parts, so as to reprove them for their faults, and urge upon them disagreeable duties, without giving them offence. Indeed, such a mixture of love and plain dealing is no where else to be found : not even in any other part of the Oracles of God. And how striking is the account the Apostle gives of his own sufferings, which yet he does with reluctance ! Ah ! how did it make me ashamed of myself, who have hitherto done or suffered nothing comparatively speaking ! But yet the Lord knows it is my desire not to live in vain.”

On the 30th of September, Mr. Benson finished the Books of Moses, having read them carefully in the Hebrew, and considered them attentively in all their parts. He expresses himself as having been much edified and comforted by many parts of them, especially the Book of Deuteronomy. “ What a wonderful man,” says he, “ was Moses ! What amazing wisdom, courage, and steadiness did he possess ! How extraordinary his zeal for the glory of God, and his love to the people of Israel ! With what patience did he bear with their manners, and with what faith intercede for their welfare ! With what near access to God and deep communion with him was he favoured ! and what mighty works did the Lord enable him to do ! and what great things were effected by his instrumentality !”

As large congregations in some churches that had been favoured with zealous evangelical Ministers, who had preached with effect the grand doctrines of the Gospel, dwindle into small lifeless assemblies, when placed under the care of pastors who are neither zealous nor evangelical ; so, in the Methodist Connexion, several classes which prospered while under the care of leaders who were much alive to Divine things, after having been put under the care of those of an opposite description, have been scattered abroad as sheep without a shepherd. On the 1st of October, Mr. Benson touches upon this subject. “ At noon I preached at Ripponden, and at night at Jagger Green, but did not find much liberty either time. The congregations are small, and the work seems to decline ; and chiefly for want of active leaders. When we have

these, the work generally flourishes, and when we have not, it declines."

Mr. Benson, instead of attributing that timidity from which he occasionally suffered much, to constitutional weakness or nervous debility, was in the habit of censuring himself on its account. An instance of his so doing occurs under date Oct. 11. "I see I have much cause to be humbled on account of my great timorousness of disposition. May the Lord in his due time deliver me from this; for it causes me to have some uncomfortable hours."

When the generality of pious characters contrast their circumstances in life with those of such as are in extreme poverty, their gratitude to God for temporal blessings is raised to an unusual pitch. A pious and well-informed mind is enabled to make a profitable use of every occurrence. The following case, related by Mr. Benson, on the 22d of Oct. is one of an uncommonly distressing nature:—"Before I left Leeds, I witnessed a most distressing scene; a man and three small children in a most wretched habitation, without any thing in the place to sit or lie upon, or even to eat; the landlord having seized upon all, not excepting the range for the fire; and the poor man hardly recovered from an affliction, by which he had been confined five weeks." In London, notwithstanding the general benevolence of its inhabitants, similar cases frequently occur; nor is it possible, in the present state of things, by the wisest and best legislative enactments, even when seconded by extensive private beneficence, wholly to prevent the recurrence of cases so distressing.

In all Mr. Benson's reading and preaching, he aimed at the glory of God, and his own advancement in holiness. After reading the Scriptures, especially, we frequently find him censuring himself for his defects, both as a Christian and a Minister. An instance of this we have under date November 3. "I employed an hour or two very profitably in reading, with prayer, the first Epistle to the Thessalonians. I saw I had great cause to bewail the little progress I had made in holiness, and that I came far short of the character of a Minister of Christ; and particularly, that I had been very deficient in 'exhorting, comforting, and charging every individual, as a father doth his children, to walk worthy of God.' I found, too, that I stood reproved by the preceding verse, not being able to say, 'Ye are my witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably, we behaved ourselves amongst you;' for though I have been preserved from dishonouring the Gospel by any open sin, yet have I not been such an example of every Christian grace and virtue as I ought to have been. God be merciful to me a sinner!" This language of sincerity and self-abasement, proceeding from the pen of a man of eminent holiness, will be unintelligible to formalists who ad-

mire themselves ; and to antinomians, who maintain that believers need not be uneasy, however defective in personal holiness.

Baxter's "Saints' Rest" is, perhaps, next to his "Call to the Unconverted," the best written, as well as most useful, of his numerous productions. He wrote it when young, and consequently at a time when he had read comparatively little ; and hence he imagined that it contained several truths which had never been published before ; but this opinion, he afterwards owned was erroneous. Two excellent abridgments of that work are in constant circulation. To a man of Mr. Benson's classical taste, the style of that work was no recommendation ; and yet, such was his relish for divine truth, however unadorned, that, on the 6th of January, he says, "I spent some time comfortably in reading Baxter's 'Saints' Rest : ' " and he adds, "O ! what cause have I to be humbled under a sense of my unfaithfulness ! Alas ! how far am I from being as diligent as I ought to be in the work of the Lord !"

On the 10th of January, 1784, Mr. Benson informs us, that in the course of the preceding week, he had read a great part of the history of David in the Hebrew Bible. "He was indeed," says he, "a great and in general a good man ; but the matter of Uriah is a sad blot in his character, which can never be wiped out, though he obtained mercy with God. Lord, what is man ! what a frail creature, and how little to be depended upon, when in the highest state of grace !"

It is not surprising that Mr. Benson should read with pleasure and profit, any part of the works written by Jeremy Taylor ; than whom a greater and better man cannot easily be conceived. He occupies a place in the first rank of the few extraordinary men whose works merit immortality. But this general and well-deserved praise, does not imply that his every opinion has truth for its basis. Having devoted some time to reading that author's "Contemplations on the State of Man," Mr. Benson says, "I was deeply impressed with a sense of the shortness of life, and uncertainty of every thing here ; and I saw and felt that the only thing worth living for, was to glorify God."

In proportion to the care with which we examine Mr. Benson's papers, we discover the more fully, that through every stage of his ministerial course he was eminently judicious. Though possessed of much constitutional and religious warmth, he knew well that he could not, by the union and exertion of both, obtain those times of refreshing which the Father hath put in his own power. One of those times he, together with Mrs. Benson, was favoured with on the 7th of February, when he observes, "In the evening, my wife and I spent some time together in prayer ; and the Lord greatly comforted and refreshed us both. My faith was so strengthened, and my heart so enlarged, that it seemed to me I might have any thing for asking. I could have con-

tinued in prayer the whole night. These are gracious seasons, but we cannot command them."

Some time before the 14th of February, Mr. Benson read a part of the first volume of Smollet's History of all Nations; in which he gives some account of Greenland, Norway, and other northern nations. And, as he always read with a view to promote his own spiritual, as well as mental improvement, he was not, in either of these respects, disappointed by the attention he paid to that volume. "I have," he says, "been entertained and profited by what I have read. My ideas of God's works have been enlarged, and my soul has been drawn out in thankfulness to the Lord, for having cast my lot in fairer ground, where we enjoy every advantage for life and godliness, and escape many of the miseries to which the inhabitants of those inhospitable climes are subject."

On the 6th of April, Mr. Benson, whose natural vivacity was chastised by religious seriousness, was led into a train of solemn reflections on man's condition in the land of his pilgrimage. The vicissitudes of life, of which all possessed of the feelings of humanity, after having lived a considerable time upon earth, are exquisitely sensible, occupied his attention. "I thought much," he observes, "upon my own situation, wandering to and fro, and never remaining long in any place; my relations whom I had left; my father, whom I never saw after I bid him farewell on Alstone Moor; my mother, whom I attended to her grave; my deceased sister's children, whom when at home with my parents, I was wont to love much; they all came into my mind, and affected my heart with much tenderness. O my God, I am a stranger and a sojourner with thee! and there is no wisdom but in employing human life to thy glory!"

Comparatively few even of those who are sincerely religious, form a due estimate of the value of time; hence the many hours they spend in conversation which has no tendency to make them wiser or better, and their suffering, sometimes, trifling occurrences to prevent their assembling together for religious purposes. A case of this sort occurred at Halifax on the 12th of April. "I was much grieved," says Mr. Benson, "to see so few at preaching on Easter Monday, when I considered that in the afternoon, some thousands had assembled to see an air-balloon ascend from the Piece-Hall: and that amongst them many Methodists waited an hour or two to see what could neither yield them instruction nor profit; but could not find time to attend the preaching. I spoke to this purpose in the sermon; and I afterwards found that my doing so had grieved a Leader, who could not be persuaded but that it was quite indifferent whether we spent an hour or two at such an amusement, or in hearing a sermon."

When we consider with what earnestness Mr. Benson preached, and that he seldom delivered short discourses, it is matter of surprise, that

he frequently preached four times a day without ruining his constitution. So often did he preach upon the 25th of April. The following is his own account of the labours and comforts of that day. "Blessed be the Lord, this has been a remarkably good day. I have enjoyed great peace of mind, and much satisfaction in my labours. I have been enabled to preach four times to large congregations, and the Lord has favoured me with great liberty in speaking."

To men unacquainted with the nature of vital religion, Mr. Benson's mentioning that on some occasions he was favoured with liberty, and that on others he was straitened, will appear as inexplicable as what St. Paul meant, when he requested the Ephesians to pray that a door of utterance might be given to him, that he might open his mouth "boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel."

Under date May 31, he laments that he was much straitened while preaching at Bramley, in the afternoon, and expressed a fear that he preached to little purpose. But in the evening he was favoured with freedom and comfort, while explaining, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." Having mentioned this, he adds, "What a great thing it is to be a Christian inwardly and outwardly! Alas! how far do most of us come short of the mark!"

On the 9th of July, Mr. Wesley, being upon a visit at Huddersfield, preached upon, "I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation." Mr. Benson says, "He showed, 1st. what the word of exhortation was, and how it differed from doctrine: 2d. Wherein the difficulty lay of suffering it; viz. from the world, the flesh, and the devil; which enemies did not so much oppose our hearing, or even believing the truth, as our applying and practising it, to which exhortation is a powerful stimulus: 3dly. He showed that to suffer the word of exhortation implies our suffering it patiently, thankfully, and fruitfully." Having furnished us with this outline of Mr. Wesley's discourse, Mr. Benson briefly adds, "It was a useful discourse, and the people were attentive."

That some of the senior Preachers, on finding their names omitted in the Deed of Declaration, which constituted the Hundred, or the legal Conference, were offended, is not a matter of surprise. They remonstrated strongly against that deed, constituted as it was, as an invasion of their rights, as Preachers. But without discussing the subject, let us attend to Mr. Benson's account of how it was decided at the Leeds Conference. "In the morning of July 27, the Declaration Deed, and the Appeal which some of the brethren had published against it, were considered. Mr. Wesley traced his power from its first rise, and showed that the Conference, from its commencement, had consisted of persons whom he had desired to meet for the purpose of conferring with him. He insisted that he had a right to name the members of it, and fix their number. This Appeal, he said, represented him as unjust, oppressive,

and tyrannical, which he was not; and that the authors of it had betrayed him; and, by doing so, had hurt the minds of many, and kindled a flame throughout the kingdom. Hence he required that they should acknowledge their fault, and be sorry for it, or he could have no further connection with them.”—Mr. Benson, on the 2d of August, resuming the subject, says, “Our brethren who had been concerned in the Appeal, rejoiced our hearts, by acknowledging their fault, and making submission. In consequence of their doing so, they were admitted among their brethren, and appointed to Circuits. I trust now our Conference will end in harmony and love.”

Had not Mr. Wesley, upon this occasion, exerted the power to which, as the Founder of a religious body, he was entitled, but suffered the Appeal in question to become a subject of popular debate, to be decided by a simple majority; his doing so would have been the source of many contentions amongst both Preachers and people. On the propriety of his using the power he claimed, and to which we think he was entitled, even men of sense and piety will think differently.

It may be as proper here as in any other part of the work to observe, that the first Conference, held in London, in June, 1744, was composed of no more than John and Charles Wesley, together with three other Clergymen and John Meriton. By this Conference, the doctrines and discipline of the Methodists were carefully examined, freely discussed, and finally decided upon. It does not appear that Mr. Wesley ever suffered any doctrine or point of discipline to be decided by “the popular vote.” And well was it for both preachers and people, that all their doctrines and the essential parts of their discipline, which, taken together, may be termed the constitution of the Methodists, were decided upon and recorded, before the existence of a Conference, in which the fate of every question, unless withdrawn by the proposer, is discussed, and decided by a simple majority. No member of the Methodist Conference, however respectable for parts and piety, would be suffered in that assembly to make the truth of any doctrine of Methodism, or essential part of its discipline, a subject of debate. Several parts of the discipline of the Methodists are peculiar to themselves; but their doctrines have always been substantially those of the Church of England, and of all other National Reformed Churches.

At the Leeds Conference, Mr. Benson was appointed to the Sheffield Circuit. On the 13th of August, he says, “I praise God, he has brought me and my family safe to Sheffield, where we find a comfortable habitation, and an affectionate people. May he bless us among them, and crown my labours, and those of my colleagues, with success.”

On the 20th of August, he mentions the following reasons for having, in conjunction with the principal members of the Society at Sheffield, taken a chapel for the purpose of having divine service in the forenoon.

"1st. As it is at a considerable distance from our chapel, it will be a means of spreading the work: and 2dly, As there are no seats to be had in the churches, nor even room for the people, and most on that account loiter at home on the best part of the Lord's day; it will be a place where any of our people may attend who do not go to church."

—These reasons, notwithstanding Mr. Benson's strong attachment to the Church, he considered sufficient to justify his conduct in preaching during the time of Church-service: for notwithstanding the reluctance with which he took a single step that might have a tendency to lead to even a partial separation from the Church, the necessity of the case induced him to adopt the measure in question.

The following outlines of a sermon preached by Mr. Benson, and which are found under date August 27, on the subject of humility, appear worthy of insertion. "1. It is a grace of the first rank in Christianity, as being mentioned in Scripture with peculiar marks of distinction. 2. Most distinguishing promises are made to it. 3. It is in its nature an introduction to the other graces of Christianity. 4. It is a grace which adorns every other Christian virtue, and recommends religion to the beholder. 5. It is eminently recommended to us by the example of Christ. 6. It will, in conjunction with love, accompany us to heaven."

On the 5th of September he preached at Doncaster, to what he looked upon as a small congregation. His subject upon that occasion was the Parable of the Gospel-Supper. For a time some talked to each other, and others, in opposition to every thing serious and becoming, manifested their levity by laughter; but, on being reproved, became tolerably serious. Though that town has been for many years the head of a Circuit, exceedingly few came at that time to the Methodist Chapel. "Alas!" says Mr. Benson, "such a town I think I never visited before. Neither curiosity, nor a concern for their souls, nor any other motive, will, it seems, induce its inhabitants to come under the word."

Great care ought to be taken by Ministers, Parents, and Guardians, for the purpose of teaching children to conduct themselves reverently, during the whole of the time they are at public worship. For want of proper instruction upon this subject, we occasionally see children, in churches and chapels, behave in a manner, which no person acquainted with the rules of decorum would consider tolerable in a private company. On the 28th of September, Mr. Benson had to complain of the behaviour of some such untutored children. "I preached," says he, "in the evening, when some boys, behaved very ill, and disturbed the congregation. I reproved them, but with little effect."

That Dr. Hammond was a great, good, and learned man, few will call in question. But it seems that, like too many learned divines of his day, he was more skilful in pointing out the duties of religion, than in

laying its foundation. In the present age, he is not much esteemed as an evangelical Commentator. It will be gratifying to the reader to know Mr. Benson's opinion of him, as a writer. "On the 29th of September, I spent a great part of the forenoon in reading various passages of Hammond on the New Testament. He was undoubtedly a man of deep learning and great judgment, but perhaps too much afraid of enthusiasm. I did not much admire his Paraphrase, but his Annotations and critical remarks are generally as judicious as they are learned."

Under date October 6, Mr. Benson notices a case which strongly exemplifies the power of religion. It was that of a woman whose legs were prodigiously swelled, and one of her arms laid open from the elbow to the wrist. "And yet," says he, "in the midst of her extraordinary sufferings, she was rejoicing and praising God, saying she could never sufficiently express his goodness to her, nor praise him for all his mercies; and that she had no desire for the removal of this affliction till God should see fit, and that she doubted not it would work for her good."

On October 19, he speaks of his affections as having been unusually drawn out after God.—"I gave myself up, for an hour and a half, entirely to prayer, and it was to me a remarkably blessed season. I found my soul drawn out with such desire after the favour and image of God, that my body was frequently ready to faint. O how I longed to be made holy and useful, to glorify God myself, and be an instrument in his hands of bringing others to glorify him! Over and over, with infinite sweetness, did I dedicate myself, with all I am and have, to his service."

It is not matter of surprise, that a man who thus consecrated all his powers to God, should be distinguished for his ability to inculcate the whole truth as it is in Jesus, and that with uncommon clearness, strength, and affection.

On the 5th of December, after preaching at three different places, and meeting classes at each of them, Mr. Benson says he was exceedingly weary. He then adds, "Blessed be God, I love his work; O that I may see it more abundantly prosper!" In the course of the day, he had an opportunity of conversing with a man who, having been convinced of sin by reading the Pilgrim's Progress, laboured under uncommon distress of mind. He says, "I spoke a little to him by way of encouragement. May he not rest till he rest in Christ!"

It is highly probable, if not certain, that no other human performance has ever passed through as many editions as that work cursorily mentioned by Mr. Benson. It is one of the few works which merit popularity. Bunyan knew well how to distinguish betwixt Law and Gospel; and hence sent none to either Mr. Legality or Mr. Civility to be delivered from the burden of sin. He possessed uncommon natura

talents, was eminent for holiness, and directly and powerfully opposed to Antinomianism.

On the 14th of January, 1785, deeply impressed with a sense of the value of time, and disposed to reflect upon himself for not improving it to better purpose, Mr. Benson thus expresses himself. "Alas! there is now a fortnight of the new year elapsed, and how little have I done for God! How rapid the motion of time, and how soon shall I be in eternity! O Lord, my God, help me to live to thee!"

Unwearied in his exertions to promote the salvation of souls, he preached four times on the 30th of January. His sermon in the evening was delivered on account of the death of a member of the society, who, he says, "lived unblameably, and died comfortably." Among other striking things, the day before his death, he said to his wife, "What do you think heaven is?" She replied, "I cannot tell." To this he answered, "It must surely be love: I feel so much love to God in my heart, and such comfort in that love, that I cannot but think heaven must be of the same nature."

Mr. Benson, under date February 1, gives an affecting account of a distressed family which, accompanied by one or more individuals, he had visited the preceding day. "When we entered the miserable habitation, we saw a tall and emaciated man sitting by a small fire, with a little child on his knees the picture of hunger, and another sitting by him in the same feeble state. We turned our eyes to the bed, and saw his wife lying upon a bed of chaff or straw, without so much as a blanket under her, and only one blanket and her own cloak over her. Most of the family had been ill for a long time; and they had no more relief from the parish than four shillings a week. I was thankful that we had it in our power to give them five shillings. Several others that we visited were in a similar distress. Blessed be the Lord for so useful a charity as this subscription for the poor, from which so many distressed families and individuals are relieved."

It is not matter of surprise, that, even in the year 1785, when the circuits of the Methodist Preachers were far from being so extensive as they had been at a much earlier stage of Methodism, that such of them as had families, should find their being so much from home as they generally were, a great trial. This Mr. Benson found to be the case on the 10th of February,—"I have enjoyed much peace of mind these four days, and often liberty of access to God in prayer. But in and through all, I have found it a trial, especially yesterday and to-day, to be so much from my wife and children. May the Lord sanctify this trial to me, till he shall be pleased to remove it! And may he grant, if it is his will that I should thus wander about, and if he sees that I shall be more useful in this manner of life than any other, that I may never give it up to get rid of the trial!" This is the language of a man sensible of the in-

conveniences and troubles to which, by his mode of life, he was subject; but at the same time submissive to the will of God, who, be the earth never so unquiet, fixes the bounds of his people's habitations.

On the 13th of February he preached four times. In the evening he was remarkably assisted, while he explained and applied Rom. ii. 4. An extraordinary power accompanied the discourse, especially during the application. "Indeed," says he, "we have much cause to be thankful, that the Lord is carrying on his work rapidly amongst us; many being awakened, and some justified, every week. Every Sunday I have been in town, for some time, I have joined to the Society four or five members, and all deeply awakened. May this blessed work go on!"

Those minute philosophers who maintain, that though God governs the universe, it is infinitely beneath his dignity to attend to all the parts of which it is composed, would smile to be informed that Mr. Benson acknowledged a wise and kind providence in his being provided with a horse, when he needed one to carry him to several parts of his Circuit. To the theory or taste of such readers, a narrative of a genuine Christian, whether a Minister of Christ or not, can never be accommodated. From their views of the divine government, they can derive no comfort; for, according to their system, ten thousand calamities may befall themselves, who constitute no more than a *minute* part of the universe, without being so much as noticed by Him, to whom a sparrow bears as much proportion as a system of worlds. Rejecting the absurd and contradictory doctrine of a general providence which does not include a particular one, we turn with pleasure to what Mr. Benson mentions, on March 1, as an instance of providential interference. "I thank God, when I was at a loss how to perform my little journeys, the weather continuing exceedingly cold; he provided me with a horse, which carried me well, so that I suffered very little inconvenience from the inclemency of the season."

Having slept none on the night of the 24th of March, Mr. Benson was much indisposed the following day; and yet so early as six o'clock in the morning, he attended a prayer-meeting. After this, accompanied by Mrs. Benson, he went to Rotherham, where he preached at nine o'clock. It being Good Friday, he afterwards went to church, where his soul was comforted at the Lord's table. A messenger from Sheffield arriving to inform him that his eldest son was dangerously ill, prevented his holding a watchnight. "When," he says, "we came home, we found that he had been extremely ill; and that it had been doubted by several whether he would live many hours. He was then a little better; and I felt an earnest desire, and a degree of confidence, that the Lord would spare him to us. But I endeavoured to give him up to God, that his will, which I knew was best, might be done." In these few sen-

tences, it is difficult to determine whether the affectionate father, or the humble and resigned Christian, is most conspicuous.

Though Mr. Benson, when preaching in the afternoon of the 27th of March, was not favoured with much liberty, he had such power with God in prayer, after the sermon, that many in the congregation were so affected as to weep aloud. By those who would banish every thing like passion from a religion which chiefly consists in loving God with all the heart, the effect now mentioned will be attributed to confined air, sympathy, enthusiasm, or any thing else equally incapable of producing it, rather than to divine influence. In a country like this, where true Christianity appears with such evidences in its favour, as do every thing but force the assent of those to whom they are proposed; to do which would be to destroy the nature of true faith; it requires much voluntary faith to be an infidel.

Mr. Benson, on the 2d of April, undertook the difficult task of convincing a man that he was covetous. This may well be termed a task extremely difficult. The question may be proposed, what proportion of a man's property must he devote to charitable purposes, in order to prove that he is free from the sin of covetousness? To answer, As much as he can spare,—only opens the way to another question; namely, As much as he can spare from what? Let this be answered by saying, As much as he can spare from superfluities; and out of that reply these questions arise: What do you include in superfluities? Do you mean every thing not necessary for the support of human life? If so, you proscribe civilization, and advocate the cause of savagism. Every rich man possesses more than the necessities, nay, more than the conveniences of life, understood in a sober sense. These St. Paul charges to be rich in good works; and informs, that they shall reap in proportion to what they sow. These observations are not designed as the slightest apology for covetousness, a sin pronounced idolatry by Inspiration itself; but to check the too general practice of condemning, as covetous, all who do not come up to the standard of charity erected by those who, instead of judging themselves, condemn their neighbour. We doubt not, Mr. Benson had sufficient reason for endeavouring to persuade Mr. — that he was covetous. After expressing a fear that he exerted himself to little purpose, he adds, "Alas! how hard is it to convince any of this sin, however notorious for it!"

He frequently mentions Dr. Watts as one of his favourite authors. He says, on the 5th of May, "I have these three last days employed several hours very comfortably in reading and considering Watts on the State of Separate Spirits. I have had many doubts upon this subject, but I think they are all removed; and my soul has been much refreshed and comforted with a lively hope of being with Jesus in glory, as soon as I put off this body."

That the souls of believers, when separate from their bodies, will be in a state of felicity, and with Christ, in such a sense as they neither were nor could be, during the period of their probation; none can doubt, who believe that St. Luke and St. Paul wrote under the influence of plenary inspiration: for the former of these inspired penmen tells us that our Lord said to the penitent thief, "This day thou shalt be with me in paradise;" and the latter says, that he desired to be "absent from the body and present with the Lord." Enough is revealed to assure us of the conscious and happy state of the souls of believers betwixt the time of their death and the resurrection, but not to satisfy our curiosity.

It appears that this subject occupied Mr. Benson's mind for some time on the 16th of June. "I was," says he, "favoured with a deeper insight into the eternal world, than I ever had before, particularly the felicity of the separate state, between death and the resurrection."

On taking an account, in July, of the members of the Society at Sheffield, Mr. Benson found that, from the preceding Conference, 200 had been added to their number. "Many," he observes, "have died; some are removed; and not a few have back-slidden. However, blessed be God, we have a considerable increase." This, notwithstanding his faithful and unremitting labours, he could not say of some other parts of the Circuit; a sure proof, that, upon some occasions, a Minister eminent for piety, zeal, and talents, may, to all human appearance, labour in vain, and spend his strength for nought.

It seems that through the whole course of Mr. Benson's ministry, he seldom attended a Conference from which he could stay consistently with what he conceived to be his duty. Mr. Wesley had ordered him to attend that held in London, in 1785; but not so peremptorily as to leave him no liberty to choose or remonstrate; hence on the 18th of July, he determined to send Mr. Rhodes, one of his colleagues, as his substitute. On the evening of that day, Mr. Wesley informed him by letter, that he was quite satisfied with the reasons he had assigned for his unwillingness to attend. The principal of these were, his love of peace and quietness, and his dislike to taking so long a journey, for what he conceived would promote no valuable end in favour of himself or others.

The 24th of July was to him a day of great labour and consolation. "I have," he remarks, "been enabled to preach four times to-day with liberty and comfort, beside reading prayers and meeting the Society; and I have enjoyed peace of mind, and confidence in the Lord. After the labours of the day, I visited a dying woman, and had reason to hope she was awakened, and would find mercy."

The lives of eminently holy and useful men, especially Ministers of the Gospel, are perused with pleasure and profit by the generality of pious readers. Mr. Benson having, as he expresses it, looked over the

Life of Archbishop Leighton, prefixed to a volume of his sermons, says, on the 18th of August, "Truly he was a great and good man. What an admirable character does Dr. Burnet give of him! He says, after twenty years intimate acquaintance with him, he must affirm, that he never heard him speak an idle word, nor one that was not directly to edification; and never once saw him indulge any temper one would not wish to be found in at death."

Surely, few ever did more honour to the mitre than that learned and eminently holy Archbishop. He reminds us of Bishop Bedell, whose natural courage, joined to his extraordinary attainments, would probably have led him, had he been placed in Dr. Leighton's situation, to contend longer than he did against the abuses of Prelacy, and such Prelates as were a disgrace to the mitre. The man who had courage to remonstrate against the corruption of Archbishop Usher's Court would not have shrunk from any danger that he might incur by strongly protesting against such tyrannical measures as, during Leighton's time, were equally opposed to the interests of both Church and State. Leighton, who was one of the brightest ornaments of his age and country, was not, like Bedell, formed to contend with the storms which in his day agitated the church. But though he had not the natural courage of Bedell, he had grace sufficient to resign his Archbishopric, when he conceived he could not retain it without countenancing, in some degree, certain practices which his soul abhorred. And no doubt, had he been called to it, he would have suffered martyrdom, with the holy intrepidity of a Primitive Bishop.

The 7th and 8th of September were days, in the course of which Mr. Benson experienced a more than common portion of divine consolation. On the 8th he says, "Yesterday and to-day I have given myself up chiefly to meditation and prayer, and have found my mind much humbled and much comforted. The subject of my meditation was chiefly the happiness and glory of the heavenly world, and the character and qualifications of those who shall be admitted there. O what delightful views I had of the blessed world, and how did my soul hunger and thirst after righteousness, after the image of God, the divine nature. I think I never found my soul in a happier or more serious frame, or more deeply engaged with God in prayer, than I might live more to his glory than I had ever done, and be filled with all his fulness. I trust the Lord will confirm me in a state of nearness to himself, and that I shall begin to live indeed!"

On coming to a place called Hart-hill, on the 20th of September, Mr. Benson learned, that two of the members of the Society there, a widowed mother and her son, had the day before been buried in one grave. In the evening he preached on the occasion of their death to a crowded audience. "They both died," says he, "in great peace." A little more

than a year previous to his death, the young man joined the Society, and shortly after obtained a degree of comfort; but did not experience strong consolation till some time in February, when he heard Mr. Benson preach from 2 Cor. xiii. 5. From that time to his latest moment, his joy abounded: and he exhorted all who came to see him to seek the Lord, and live to his glory. His mother, who had been a Methodist for upwards of twenty-five years, during which time she adorned her Christian profession, witnessed in death a good confession.

It frequently happens, in the order of God's infinitely wise and gracious providence, that the conversion of one person in a large family, leads to the diffusion of genuine piety among several, if not the whole of its members. Mr. Benson's Journal, under date October 7, contains a case in point. "This evening, I was much refreshed, while visiting Peter Dewsbury, a young man who seems to be dying of a consumption, but in a very happy state of mind. He was the first of the family that became religious; and he was an instrument in the hands of God of turning his father and mother, and two brothers and a sister, from the error of their ways."

After having been severely tried by manifold temptations, Mr. Benson was, on the 1st of November, favoured with a remarkable time of refreshing, when he remarks, "O, how has my soul been humbled in the dust! and what great nearness have I found to the Lord in prayer, and confidence that he would hear and answer! Indeed, I had such a view of his attributes, his wisdom, power, and goodness, that it seemed impossible that he should deny me any thing which he knew would be good for me. At the same time, I could not desire any thing, but that his will might be done in me and by me, and that I might glorify him, and serve my generation." What a man of faith and prayer was Mr. Benson! hence the divine unction that generally accompanied both his public discourses and private conversations.

During the three days preceding December 14, he was considerably afflicted with a bad cold, accompanied by a cough, which kept him much awake: but not consulting flesh and blood, nor even adopting such measures as many would judge essential to his recovery, he preached every evening, and met several classes.

On Christmas-day, he preached four times at Sheffield. At six in the morning, he addressed a large congregation from 1 Tim. i. 15; in the forenoon his subject was Luke ii. 10, 11; in the afternoon he preached from Luke ii. 14; and at the New-Chapel in the evening, where the congregation was prodigiously large, he had great liberty, while he explained and applied these words, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil."

At the beginning of January, 1786, Mr. Benson says, "This day, I have preached four times, as well as read prayers, and kept a meeting

for the Society in the evening, for the purpose of renewing our covenant with God. My mind has been in a sweet and good frame all the day. O my God! let me, indeed, have a *new year*,—a year of such communion with thee, of such holiness and happiness, as I have never had! May I be more faithful and fruitful than ever!—more devoted to thee, and more diligent to do good to others!”

After writing several letters to his friends in the North, on the 9th of January, Mr. Benson says, “My heart melts when I recollect the sweet moments I spent with my old friends in Northumberland. This constantly contracting friendships, together with being soon separated from one’s friends, is a very disagreeable circumstance in our mode of life.” What Mr. Benson terms a disagreeable circumstance is unquestionably such; but it is not without some important advantages, as it affords itinerant Preachers frequent opportunities of becoming acquainted with many of the excellent of the earth, of the bare names of whom they could otherwise have no knowledge, and is an additional stimulus to induce them to live as strangers and pilgrims upon the earth.

On the evening of January 31, Mr. Woodcroft, at Sheffield, gave Mr. Benson the following account of a Quaker, at Falmouth. “This man, unknown to his family and friends, had joined with some others in fitting out a privateer to act against the French, who had allied themselves to the American States, while in arms against Great Britain. The privateer was successful, and when peace was concluded, there was a considerable dividend for the proprietors. The Quaker received his share among the rest; but his conscience reproaching him for what he had done, he considered himself guilty of robbery. About this time, he was brought by affliction to the gates of death, which greatly increased his distress. He frequently exclaimed, ‘O that ill-gotten money!’ Neither his wife nor friends knew what he meant. At length he resolved, that, should the Lord raise him up, he would make restitution to the injured parties, if they could be found. The Lord did raise him up; and he sent his son to Paris with the sum, directing him to advertise in the Paris Gazette, that any persons who had suffered by such a privateer, upon coming and proving their losses, would be refunded, in proportion to his share in the prizes. This was accordingly done, to the astonishment of all France. Mr. Woodcroft read a letter from a few Quakers at Nismes, written to the Friend in question, in which they congratulated him upon his principles, and, in very affectionate and moving terms, expressed their approbation of his conduct.”

While we admire the pacific principles of the Friends, exemplified in the case now related, we know it is not peculiar to them, though they may express themselves in broader and stronger terms upon this subject, to set themselves against obtaining money in the manner which caused the honest Friend so much uneasiness.

We quote the following passage from Mr. Benson's Journal, chiefly for the purpose of endeavouring to account for the fact, that Christians, in general, are less affected by a description of Christ's sufferings, than by an account of what some of his followers have endured. "On the afternoon of April 9, I preached on Isaiah liii. 6. But, O what cause have I to mourn, that I am myself so little affected by Christ's sufferings!"

Many persons, eminent for piety, have, in common with Mr. Benson, censured themselves for what they termed their obduracy, while reading or hearing an account of the "agony and bloody sweat, and of the cross and passion," of the Lord Jesus. But may not what they so harshly censure, be accounted for, without the least impeachment of their piety? They have been accustomed, from their infant days, to hear that Christ was crucified; and hence, well acquainted with the subject, it comes to them stripped of the charm of novelty, which has an amazing aptitude to move the passions. This is one reason why the most descriptive account of our Lord's sufferings affects us less than a simple narrative of what many of his followers had to endure. And another is, the dignity of our Lord's person, who, though he suffered as a man, and infinitely more than any mere man ever did; yet his being God as well as man, raises him so far superior to all created beings, that we cannot sympathize with him in his sufferings as we can with our fellow Christians, in their sinkings and sorrows.

Mr. Benson knew well that there is an awful possibility of a Minister's being exemplary, and even zealous in the performance of all the external duties of his sacred office, while, at the same time, he is himself making little or no progress in the divine life. On the 26th of May, he remarks, "I have enjoyed peace of mind these few days, and have, I hope, had a single eye to the glory of God in every thing; but yet I have not found much nearness to God, nor comfort in communion with him; chiefly, I believe, through my devoting so little time to secret devotion; and employing my thoughts too much upon the externals of my duty. O how hard I find it to attend to every part of my duty, as the shepherd of a flock, and yet keep my mind free for intercourse with God!"

Under date June 6, we find an instance of the attention with which Mr. Benson watched over all committed to his care. After having preached at Rotherham in the evening, he says, "I met two classes, and had the comfort to find that they all had been preserved from the snares of the devil during the late fair and feast, save one, who had drunk to excess. He came back to us much humbled; however, I thought it advisable to defer giving him a ticket for the present; but I permitted him to meet in class."

On the 25th of June, after a sleepless night, which was followed by bodily indisposition, Mr. Benson preached three times, and held a love-

feast. A part of his sermon, in the afternoon, was accompanied to the hearts of many with extraordinary power. This they evinced by shedding abundance of tears. At the love-feast, many spoke with freedom, and apparently under divine influence, of God's gracious dealings with their souls.

On taking an account of the numbers in society in the Sheffield Circuit, about the 8th of July, he found that they had increased 350 in the course of the two preceding years. This excited his warmest gratitude to God, without the agency of whose Spirit, the best and ablest Ministers must preach in vain.

The Conference, this year, began at Bristol on the 25th of July. That burning and shining light, the Rev. John Fletcher, was, after the preceding Conference, taken to his glorious reward. Mr. Wesley, in answer to the question, "Who have died this year?" replied, in his strong laconic manner, "JOHN FLETCHER,—a pattern of all holiness, scarce to be paralleled in a century."*

Mr. Benson's great love of retirement, induced him to avoid as many Conferences as he possibly could. He had not attended that held in London the preceding year; and he expressed his gratitude on finding matters so ordered, that he could remain in his Circuit, this year. "I am thankful to the Lord," he observes, "that I had a good excuse for not going to Conference; finding much more pleasure and profit in retirement than in the hurry and bustle of a general meeting of the Preachers."

Having taken leave of his warm-hearted affectionate friends at Sheffield, among whom he had laboured faithfully for the space of two years, he, with his family, proceeded towards Hull, his new appointment. On the 21st of August, he preached at a place called Thorne; and, at the earnest request of his friends there, he discoursed again the next evening, when many were much affected while he applied, "Strive

* Of the person of Mr. Fletcher, the following description is given by one of his intimate friends:—

"He was above the middle stature, strongly built, and well-proportioned. The contour of his face was interesting and noble; his eye was active and penetrating; his nose was moderately aquiline; and his whole countenance such as peculiarly accorded with the extraordinary grace and elevation of his character. His deportment and manners were of the most engaging and courteous kind, presenting such a combination of gravity, condescension, and gentleness, as few have ever witnessed. Humility and dignity are seldom seen familiarly associated in the same person; but in this master of Israel, they grew together in so exact a proportion, that, while he every where discovered a sort of angelic superiority in his air, his carriage, and his conversation; that superiority was inseparably blended with all the meekness and simplicity of a little child. His figure was wonderfully adapted to all the sacred offices he had to perform; but of his appearance in the pulpit it may especially be said, that the liveliest fancy could not frame for any of the ancient saints an aspect more venerable or apostolic."

to enter in at the strait gate." On the 23d of August, after an agreeable journey, he and his family arrived at Hull in safety, where they were received with that cordial affection, for which the Methodists there have been long remarkable.

Much of Mr. Benson's time, for about a week before the 9th of September, was taken up in consulting with several of the principal members of the Society at Hull, on the subject of erecting a new chapel in the town, and on that of enlarging the chapel at Beverley. On the 10th of September, he says, "Last night and this morning I preached at Hull, and was favoured with the divine presence both times, especially in the morning, when many wept, while I was showing how we are reconciled to God by the body of Christ's flesh, offered up to God for us. In the forenoon I rode to Beverley, where I preached at noon and at night, and met all the classes. At both times the congregations were large, and much affected, especially at noon, while I explained and applied 1 Cor. iii. 11, 13."

The 17th of September was to Mr. Benson a day of great labour, but, he feared, to little valuable purpose. In the morning he rode to Sea-thorn, where he preached at nine and at twelve. At one he set off for Patterington, where he discoursed at two; he afterwards went to Ross, where, after having met the little society, he preached. At both Patterington and Ross, he says, "We were much disturbed by some wretches, who continued talking and behaving ill all the time; however, the congregations were large at both places. I fear we are not to expect any great good to be done in Holderness; the country being very thinly inhabited, and the people wretchedly poor, ignorant, and stupid."

Amidst his excessive labours, in every part of which he steadily aimed at the glory of God, he was far from securing his own approbation. On the 23d of September, he says, "On Thursday night I preached at Hull. My mind has been generally kept in peace, and I have sometimes enjoyed a degree of nearness to the Lord. But, alas! I am, indeed, always an unprofitable servant. O that I were directed and enabled to live more to the glory of God, and to make a better use of my precious time."

Thus, no more satisfied with his religious attainments than Julius Cæsar was with his conquests, Mr. Benson eagerly pressed towards the mark of perfect holiness.

About this time, he was grievously afflicted with a painful complaint. Referring to it, he says, on the 5th of October, "I bless God, I have found a measure of patience under the affliction; and I hope He will so sanctify it to me, as to make it a lasting blessing. In my greatest extremity, one night, when I could not get a moment's sleep, I cried unto the Lord, and he afforded me relief; and from that time I began to recover. O that I may call upon the Lord as long as I live!"

It is highly encouraging to a Minister of Christ, to learn that God crowns his labours with success. The truth of this, Mr. Benson proved upon the 20th of November, when he observes, "This evening I was happy to find notes sent up to pray for one in distress of mind, and return thanks for two that had obtained justifying faith under the word. I hope these are drops before a shower. May the Lord stir us up to pray for a revival of his work!"

At Hull, in the evening of December 25, Mr. Benson was powerfully assisted in preaching to an exceedingly large congregation. "I hope," says he, "many felt the power of the word. We continued singing and praying till after nine o'clock."

Few, if any, ever complied more fully with the precept, "Judge yourselves," than Mr. Benson. Hence, his readiness to prefer every man of piety to himself. He humbled himself, and therefore was exalted by Him who is the fountain of honour. On the 30th of December, after having read part of the Life of JOSEPH ALLEINE, he remarks, "I have great cause for humiliation; 1st, For want of mercy to men's bodies, not giving and lending, I fear, so much as I ought; and, 2dly, For want of mercy to their souls, not taking pains enough to instruct, reprove, exhort, &c. in a private manner, in the families I visit. I have found my soul drawn out in desire to be more faithful in these points for the future."

On the morning of January 1, 1787, Mr. Benson preached at Beverley, and, at noon, in another part of his Circuit. He then proceeded to Hull, where, at night, he and the Society renewed their covenant with God. "The Society," says he, "and many others were present; and I think it was the most solemn and affecting meeting I ever attended. The Lord was remarkably present, and the whole congregation seemed to melt and bow before him in reverence, humility, and love. There was weeping on all sides, and there was also rejoicing. Many found it the most refreshing time they had ever experienced, and did, indeed, renew their covenant with God. My own soul was greatly comforted; and I trust I shall be enabled more than ever to devote myself to God's glory."

But, notwithstanding the more than ordinary degree of comfort with which Mr. Benson was favoured upon that occasion, his mind was severely exercised during the course of the two or three following days. On the 4th of January, he observes, "I have been in a dull and languid state of mind, harassed with cares and reasonings. One cause, indeed, may have been want of sleep, which always depresses my spirits. O how certainly am I dependent upon the Lord for every degree of light, peace, and comfort, I enjoy. May I be more sensible of this, and daily look to him for all I want, for soul and body, for time and eternity!"

Mr. Benson read an account, on January 5, of the closing scene of Joseph Alleine's Life; and, as he was in the habit of doing, regretted that he had, as he conceived, been so much inferior to that pattern of ministerial faithfulness.—“O, how ashamed I am of myself, when I consider his entire devotedness to God; the immense pains he took to do good both to men's souls and bodies; even in the midst of his own many infirmities and afflictions; and his great patience, resignation, and contentment, under his extreme sufferings! O, that I could imitate him even in some low degree!”

The following observations made by Mr. Benson on perusing Wesley's Life of the Rev. John Fletcher, cannot fail to be interesting to such readers as had the pleasure of being acquainted with those three eminent ministers of Christ.

“February 2. I spent this forenoon in reading Mr. Fletcher's Life, published by Mr. Wesley. I am very glad that Mr. Wesley has obtained so much information concerning Mr. Fletcher, and that he has furnished us with such an edifying and useful account of him. I have found my soul greatly blessed in perusing it; and indeed I have great cause to be humbled, considering how far short I am of his character, and, what is more, how little I have profited by what I have known of him, and seen in him ever since the year 1768, in which we became acquainted with each other. O, that I could now begin to follow him as he followed Christ!”

From the practical uses to which Mr. Benson directed all his reading and studies, it would appear that he increased in holiness in proportion to his progress in knowledge. Such speculations as had neither a direct nor indirect tendency to promote the best interests of men, however admired by such as seem not to consider that religion is a practical science, he considered beneath the attention of beings in a state of trial for eternity. How opposite was his character to that of many who amuse themselves with Divinity as a science, without ever proving, from experience, that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation!

There are few points in the whole body of Christian Theology, which Mr. Benson has not more or less elucidated in the course of his Journal. He knew well that persons eminently holy may, on many accounts, be cast down and disquieted, while, at the same time, they are as acceptable to God, as when their joy, with little or no mixture of grief, is at its greatest height. Upon this subject, his own words will best convey his ideas.

“February 9. Blessed be the Lord I was exceedingly comforted this morning, while reading a sermon written by Mr. Walker of Truro. I saw clearly that, through the timorousness of my temper, and the accusations of the enemy, I had frequently called the safety of my state in question, and doubted and feared without reason. I saw that I had

both dishonoured God, and hurt my own soul, casting myself down, and going on heavily, when I ought to have rejoiced in the Lord. I was, and, blessed be God, am firmly persuaded that I am the Lord's, his servant and child, and an heir of his kingdom; and I can rejoice in hope of glory."

About this time he was diligent in perusing Doddridge's Paraphrase and Notes upon the New Testament. That learned, pious, and amiable Divine, was in the first rank of his favourite authors.

He mentions, in glowing terms of gratitude, the unspeakable happiness he experienced on the 15th of March, while engaged in meditation and prayer.—"I saw the service of God to be perfect freedom, and longed to spend and be spent in it to my latest breath. Nearly the whole world appeared to me to be immersed in sin and ignorance, and I willingly offered myself to be used as an instrument in the Lord's hands to spread knowledge and piety among men."

We have often thought, that the writings of the New Testament, upon the supposition that the Socinian hypothesis is true, do not merit the appellation even of a cunningly-devised fable; for, in order to reconcile them to that scheme, every rule of true criticism, together with common sense, must be set at defiance. That Mr. Benson thought thus, appears from what he says, under date February 24, after reading the Sequel to Lindsay's Apology. "I have found no pleasure in reading it, but much grief; finding that he entirely misunderstands and misrepresents numberless passages of Scripture which relate to the Divinity, Atonement, Intercession, and the whole Mediation of Christ, as also those which relate to the influences of the Holy Spirit. He makes our Lord a mere man, and considers the whole benefit we derive from him to lie in his doctrine and example. I could hardly have thought it possible that any man of sense could have satisfied himself with putting such forced constructions upon the Oracles of God. O, blessed Lord, how art thou a sign spoken against in all ages!"

While Mr. Benson, on April 8, being Easter-day, preached at seven in the morning at Hull, from Luke xxiv. 34, "The Lord is risen indeed;" many of his hearers were much affected. In the forenoon he was much edified in hearing Mr. Milner preach on Heb. xi. 28. "He," says Mr. Benson, "illustrated the doctrine of our salvation by the blood of Christ, by the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage, by the blood of the Paschal Lamb; and showed, that as their security from the destroying angel depended on the sprinkling of that blood on their door-posts; so our security from the wrath of God depended on having the blood of Christ sprinkled, as it were, upon our hearts by faith." After hearing the discourse, of which he so highly approved, he received the holy sacrament. "I found," says he, "in some degree, the bread to be the communion of Christ's body, and the wine to be the communion of

his blood." In the afternoon he heard Mr. Milner, at the High Church, preach on Gal. vi. 15. In the evening, while preaching from Luke xxiv. 47, he observes, "My mind was much enlarged, especially towards the latter end of the sermon, when I came to treat of repentance and remission of sins, and invite the most guilty to come to Christ for pardon."

The state of separate spirits, occasionally occupied Mr. Benson's attention. On the 7th of May, he read once more Watts upon the subject. "I am persuaded," he remarks, "that his arguments are perfectly conclusive. I found my soul comforted, and received great consolation in believing that my soul shall be with Jesus as soon as I drop the body. O, how little, how insignificant are all earthly things, when compared with things spiritual and eternal!"

Though Mr. Benson was not one of the earliest Methodist Preachers, nor consequently had much persecution to suffer; yet when he became an itinerant, and for many years after, he had to travel much in all weathers, and, in some of the early stages of his itinerancy, be often from home during the space of some weeks, and to put up repeatedly with wretched accommodations. He frequently preached three or four times on the Lord's-day, and generally once or twice on every other day of the week. Preaching in the open air was very common for many years after he entered into the ministry. "On the 24th of June," he says, "the house being too small, in the afternoon I preached abroad, where I was much incommoded by the sun, which shone upon my head. Many seemed to be greatly affected under the word; and I hope it was not spoken in vain." He afterwards hastened to Hull, where he preached at six in the evening to a very large congregation, and "the word seemed to take effect."

With a regularity highly to his credit, he proceeded in his great and important labours, many parts of which our limits prevent us from so much as mentioning. Always disposed to avail himself of every occurrence which had a tendency to arrest the attention of the careless, or to stir up the followers of Christ to increased diligence in his service; he preached at Hull on the 25th of June, it being the time of the races there, from, "So run that ye may obtain."

Piety, good sense, and civilization, unite to dispose all who possess them, to acts of benevolence. If many pious characters were more civilized, and had their minds better cultivated, they would contribute abundantly more than they do, towards the support of charitable institutions. Some, after rising from a state of indigence to opulence, through the Divine blessing upon their honest industry, retain the penurious habits contracted in the days of their poverty. Individuals of this description may be found amongst all denominations. Some, more censorious than wise, are disposed to condemn them as wholly destitute of

genuine piety; but a judgment so severe is not supported by either Scripture or reason; for they both combine to prove, not that men who do not give all they can shall perish, but that they shall reap in proportion to what they sow.

These observations took their rise, from a remark made by Mr. Benson, on the liberal manner in which some congregations in his circuit came forward in aid of the Kingswood School. "On the 13th of April," he observes, "I have hardly ever known so much given to the Kingswood School in such small places as has been given these three nights. I hope this is a sign that our labours are not in vain among the people."

It is remarkable, that Mr. Benson, who was incapable of delivering a discourse unworthy of the approbation of an intelligent audience, should be so often distressed on account of what he conceived to be the wretchedness of his public performances. On the 23d of July, he says, "Last night, being distressed in mind on account of not finding such liberty as usual the night before, I slept hardly any at all. I have therefore been ill all this day."

But notwithstanding his indisposition, he set off about four o'clock on the morning of the next day, for a place called North Cave, on his way to the Conference. Before he had proceeded three miles from Hull, he was wet through by a thunder-storm; and having called at a place by the way, where his clothes were a little dried, he did not arrive at the place of his destination until about eight in the evening. Many waited for his coming; and late as it was, he preached to them.

After visiting several of the people at Rotherham in his way, he proceeded to Sheffield on the 26th of July, where his friends, whose souls had been often blessed under his able and faithful ministry, received him with love unknown to those "who never knew their shepherd's voice." In the evening he preached to a very large congregation from Phil. iii. 3. He concluded the day with comfort to himself and edification to others, in the house of his highly respected friend Mr. Holy.

Taking Chapel-à-firth in his way, where he preached with blessed effect on the evening of the 28th of July, he proceeded to Hayfield, and the next day went forward to New Mills, at both which places he preached; and concluded the labours of the day at Stockport, where, he says, "I was much pleased with the sight of my old friends, and glad to find them still in the way to heaven."

On the 30th of July, he arrived at Manchester, where the Conference was held this year. It ended on the 4th of August. Of himself, during the course of it, he says, "I have been as well in body as ever I was at a Conference, though I seldom slept more than three or four hours in a night. However, I never get much spiritual profit at those times."

At Leeds, in the midst of many of his most cordial friends, he preached to a very large and much affected congregation on the 6th of August. "I trust," says he, "that the fruit of this sermon will be found after many days."

Having spent about a fortnight with Mrs. Benson and the rest of his family at Bridlington, he says, "I employed my time much to my satisfaction, in reading, writing, &c. In the evenings and on the Sundays, I preached, and I hope not in vain. My soul has been generally kept in peace, and has been, sometimes, much refreshed with the Lord's loving-kindness."

In the forenoon of September 16, Mr. Benson preached at a place called Thearn, and at noon and night at Beverley. In the course of that day, in addition to his preaching so often, he delivered tickets to several classes. But not having slept well the night before, he says, "My body has been like an instrument out of tune, and my mind dull and languid. However, I have found a measure of liberty in speaking, and I hope I have not spoken in vain."—Had Mr. Benson, upon every proper occasion, attributed the dulness and languor of his mind to the state of his body, which, on account of his excessive mental and bodily labour, was often like an ill-tuned instrument; he would have escaped many painful self-reflections which he fell under.

It is to be hoped, that since the year 1787, when Mr. Benson occasionally preached in Holderness, a new generation, different in several respects from that he then described, has arisen. On the 8th of September, he writes, "The three last days I have spent in Holderness, the inhabitants of which seem the most stupid and insensible I ever saw. Our labours appear almost in vain amongst them, and our accommodations are most wretched. However, blessed be God, my own soul has been kept in peace, and I have been much edified in reading, and comforted in prayer."

That Mr. Benson frequently censured himself with undue severity, we have had many opportunities of observing; but seldom, if ever, more than he does in the following paragraph.

"October 23. Being harassed with various reasonings with respect to my want of liberty in preaching last night, and being much distressed on that account; I could not sleep till about five o'clock this morning, after which I slept about an hour, and then rose so afflicted in body and depressed in mind, that I was fit for neither reading, nor any other means of grace. Alas! how does this reasoning disposition rob me of my peace and comfort! And surely it proceeds from pride; otherwise, why am I not as much cast down when another is straitened, as when I am so myself? If my concern was purely for the glory of God and the good of souls, methinks I should be as much distressed when others

want liberty, as when I want it myself. And is my reputation yet my idol? God have mercy upon me, and deliver me!"

It is certain, that without love to our neighbour, all pretensions to piety are founded in delusion; for he that loveth not his brother abideth in death. But here two questions arise: 1st, What is that love to another which St. Paul informs us is the fulfilling of the law? and what is its extent? These questions admit of such a reply, as will justify us in concluding that Mr. Benson had not sufficient ground for censuring himself as he does in the paragraph now quoted. We love our neighbour *as* ourselves, when we always love him, and that, notwithstanding all his faults, and his having often grieved us, and disappointed our hopes; for so we love ourselves. But does this imply that it is a matter of pure indifference to us, whether he or ourselves, his relations or ours, suffer the greatest calamities! Some would answer this question in the affirmative; and in doing so condemn both themselves and all other Christians; for none of them, however eminent for piety, love their neighbour to the *extent* that they love themselves. Nor indeed are they commanded to do so; for the word, *as*, is in the passage referred to, a particle which implies *similarity*, not *equality*. To reject this interpretation is to confound the different degrees of love which the followers of Christ do, and ought to bear, to different and opposite descriptions of men, with that which they bear to themselves. Our near relations we consider in a sense as ourselves; and hence, if we are bound to love our neighbour *as much* as ourselves, St. Paul ought to be censured on account of not feeling for the inhabitants of Pagan Rome a degree of sorrow and heaviness of heart equal to what he felt for "his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh." If the justness of this reasoning be admitted, it will follow, that Mr. Benson was neither sinfully selfish, nor guilty of making an idol of his reputation; though he felt more distress of mind on account of being himself straitened in preaching, than he would have done, if he had found one or ten preachers similarly circumstanced. Seneca, the Stoic philosopher, observed, that he was so far from being disposed readily to admit one man's testimony against another, that he would not always admit a man's testimony against himself; and added, that he would allow him to have recourse to second thoughts, and sometimes to counsel. In imitation of that great man, we have endeavoured to vindicate Mr. Benson from some of his own accusations.

On the 15th of November, Mr. Benson, finding that his congregations were small in several country places, and conceiving that very little good was done in them by his instrumentality, was strongly tempted to think that he was spending his time to little purpose, and that he would be more profitably employed in educating youth, or in writing upon some religious subject. This was surely a temptation, which, however

plausible, he was enabled to resist. He lived to see the period, when, without relinquishing the work of the ministry, he was favoured with time and leisure, not only to write upon some useful subject, but upon all the parts of the Inspired Volume.

A new chapel having been erected at Hull, Mr. Benson opened it upon the evening of the 23d day of December, with a sermon from Hag. ii. 9. The chapel was prodigiously crowded, and several hundreds, for whom there was no room, were obliged to go away. "A great solemnity," says Mr. Benson, "seemed to rest upon the congregation. It seems as if I had got a burden off my mind, with which it had been oppressed for weeks."

Preaching upon particular passages of Scripture, at the request of individuals, does not in general appear an eligible practice; as those who prefer such requests are apt to expect too much from the discussion of the texts they recommend, and consequently are often disappointed; and those to whom they recommend them may be disposed to dwell on very different subjects, more suited to the state of their own minds and the edification of those whom they address. On the 10th of February, at the request of a friend, Mr. Benson preached from Eccles. xii. 7, on the separate existence of the soul after death. But he says, that he found more freedom in treating that subject a year before.

After having read several parts of Dr. Priestley's works, but especially his Disquisitions on Matter and Spirit, and his History of the Corruptions of Christianity; Mr. Benson, on the 14th of March, makes the following observation: "Of all the writers I ever read, I never met with so superficial a reasoner, nor with one who asserts so many shocking palpable falsehoods."

Some time in the course of his literary career, it is not material when, the Doctor, whose forte seems to have been Chymistry, and not either History or Divinity, in both of which he proved himself very unskilful, asserted that St. Paul was an inconclusive reasoner; and in the passage now quoted, a better scholar than the Doctor, pronounces *him* a "superficial reasoner," and an assertor of "many shocking, palpable falsehoods." By the enemies of Divine Revelation, the most absurd dogmas of the eccentric Doctor, will be received as so many intuitive truths, while they will pronounce the sober and scriptural decisions of Mr. Benson so many effects of ignorance, credulity and enthusiasm.

On the evening of April 28, Mr. Benson preached a sermon, occasioned by the death of the Rev. Charles Wesley. He was a great and good man, whose life was ably written by the late Dr. Whitehead. "His least praise," says the Rev. John Wesley, "was his talent for Poetry; although Dr. Watts did not scruple to say that that single Poem, 'Wrestling Jacob,' was worth all the verses he himself had written." While this eulogium does honour to the head and heart of Dr.

Watts, as it proves that he entered into the sense and spirit of that admirable poem; it is not to be understood as decisive against his own poetical works, but on the contrary, as a proof that

“The same good sense, which makes a man excel,
Makes him to fear he ne’er has written well.”

Mr. Benson, who gladly embraced every opportunity which offered for his attending divine service at Church, says, that on the 1st of June he was comforted at the Lord’s Supper. “In the afternoon,” he says, “I heard Mr. ———. His voice, pronounciation, and language, are excellent; but his manner of preaching is dry and doctrinal. The congregation seemed very sleepy and inattentive.” This is no matter of surprise; for, upon divine subjects, the attention of even pious and intelligent hearers cannot be excited long together by *merely* dry and doctrinal preaching.

It frequently happens that plain, close, and practical preaching, which is seldom, if ever, out of season, is offensive to those who need it most. It may be compared to a mirror which, without flattery, shows them their moral deformity. Some who stood in need of such a sight, Mr. Benson found, on the 10th of June, at a place called New Cave. “My mind,” he observes, “has been much pained to-day, at this place, to find our friends so dead and barren, and to discover some of them so backward to use the means that might restore them. We had but a poor love-feast; and though I found a measure of liberty in explaining and enforcing, ‘Thou hast left thy first love;’ yet I afterwards found that some, who probably needed the reproof most, had been offended, though I gave it with caution.”

How true it is, that every faithful minister of Christ may think, at one time or another, that his mother has “born him a man of strife and contention to the whole earth!”

The thoughts of the extraordinary labours in which Mr. Benson had to be engaged, frequently so affected his mind as to render him unable to sleep. A case of this sort he mentions on the 20th of July. “I do not know when I have been so tried as I was last night, not being able to sleep, and having to preach four times to-day, and make the Kingswood collection to-night. However, I bless the Lord for having assisted me through the business of the day with a degree of comfort; and that I have found on this, as on many other occasions, that I feared without any reason. Indeed, I dread the want of sleep more than I ought. May the Lord, if it be his will, deliver me from this temptation!”

Under date October 4, Mr. Benson says, “I have been very busily engaged in revising and preparing for the press, Remarks on Dr. Priestley’s System of Materialism, and an Essay on the Separate Existence of the Soul.”

On Mr. Benson's "SCRIPTURAL ESSAY towards the Proof of an Immortal Spirit in Man;" which is a continuation of his Remarks on Dr. Priestley's System of Materialism, it may be proper to make a few observations.—In this masterly performance, the Author maintains, and that in strict consistency with truth, that a belief in the immortality of the soul has prevailed in all countries from time immemorial; and that the prevalence of this belief among such of them as had no intercourse with each other, is a proof that it has truth for its basis. That amongst the Jews, a little before the appearance of Christ, and amongst the Gentiles, from the period in which they had made some considerable progress in science, individuals were found who either doubted or disbelieved the doctrine of the soul's immortality, the author readily admits; but he justly maintains that those few exceptions do not weaken the argument drawn from the universal consent of mankind, in proof that the soul is distinct from, and survives, the body.

After making several preliminary observations, all of which are connected with the doctrine he undertakes to establish, he says:

"I shall endeavour to show, First, That the soul is *distinct* from the body, and shall exist in a *separate state*;

"Secondly, That it shall not *sleep*, or be in a state of *stupor* or *inactivity*, but in a state of conscious happiness or misery.

"Thirdly, That the souls of the faithful are with *Jesus*.

Having thus divided his subject, he proceeds, in the second Section of the Essay, to argue in favour of the proposition, that the soul shall exist in a separate state. On the consent of all nations in favour of this doctrine, he lays considerable, but not undue stress.

After giving a quotation from Grotius, in proof, that the general belief of the soul's immortality must be traced to either a direct revelation from God, or to a tradition derived from the first parents of mankind; he judiciously rests the full proof of the doctrine upon that Revelation from heaven with which we are favoured.

Having mentioned an argument or two, founded in reason and nature, in proof that the human soul is not material, he proceeds to prove from Scripture, which alone can fully decide upon the subject, the doctrine of the soul's immortality. Without so much as noticing Dr. Priestley's positive assertions, which some admit as decisive arguments in proof that what reason, revelation, and the common sense of mankind, have united to call a man's soul, is no *soul* at all, but merely the result of a certain organization of matter: we proceed to Mr. Benson's scriptural arguments in proof that in every man there is a spirit distinct from his body.

After using several scriptural arguments, drawn from the Old Testament, and some parts of the New, to prove there is in man an immaterial and immortal spirit, the author, at page 33, says:—

“That the *soul* is distinct from the body, and will exist when the body dies, is plain from both St. Paul and St. Peter’s comparing the *body* to an *house* or *tabernacle*, and the *soul* to the inhabitant thereof, or the *body* to *clothing*, and the *soul* to the *person* clothed therewith. St. Paul’s words are, (2 Cor. v. 1—4,) ‘If the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.’ He afterwards speaks of being *unclothed*, that is, stripped of the body, or, as he explains it, *absent from* it. The very same is the language of St. Peter, (2 Epist. i. 13, 14,) ‘I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance, knowing that I must shortly put off this tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me!’ Now what a strange and unintelligible way of speaking is *this*, if the soul is no way distinct from the body, but only a mere *property*, the result of corporeal organization, which dies and is extinct when the body dies? Do we ever speak of *mere properties* in this manner? Does the Doctor *himself*, though so confident that the soul as much belongs to the brain, and is as truly a property thereof, as *Magnetism* belongs to the *Loadstone*, and is the result of that particular arrangement of matter; does he, (I say,) ever speak of *Magnetism* in this manner, and tell people of its being unclothed of the *Loadstone*?”

In the fourth Section of this work, the author fully proves, from several passages of Scripture, that the soul, when separate from the body, exists in a conscious state of happiness or misery. In proof of this position, he, with the utmost reason, lays great stress upon Rev. xiv. 13. For with what colour of reason could they be said to be *blessed* or *happy* who die in the Lord, if destitute of consciousness. The appearance of Moses and Elias to our Lord, as mentioned in Luke ix. 30, 31, he considers as a decisive proof that the soul survives the body. His own words upon the subject are:—

“St. Luke speaks very expressly, saying, ‘There talked with him two men, which were *Moses* and *Elias*.’ *Elias*, it is true, as he never *died*, but was only changed, being carried alive into heaven, probably had his glorified body with him. But ‘*Moses*, the servant of the Lord, died in the land of Moab,’ &c. Deut. xxxiv. 5—6. *He*, therefore, at least, was a disembodied spirit, and made visible probably by assuming some vehicle for that purpose.”

From the different states of Dives and Lazarus, after death, as mentioned in Luke xvi., the author justly infers that the soul survives the body. “Supposing,” he observes, “this passage of Scripture be not *true history*, but only a *parable*, yet still it will furnish most convincing evidence of the *existence* and *happiness* or *misery* of separate spirits. For though it be a parable, or parabolical representation of things, it certainly must be founded on truth, and intended to teach us truth. But

on the principles of the doctrine I oppose, it is founded on a *lie*, and intended to teach a *lie*."

Having proved that the soul is distinct from the body, and that it shall exist in a *separate* state, the author proceeds to show that the departed souls of the faithful are with Jesus. Having quoted 1 Thess. v. 10, in which St. Paul says, Christ Jesus "died for us, that whether we sleep or wake, we should live together with him," the author reasons thus on the passage:—

"The word *sleep* here, cannot mean *spiritual* sleep, or a state of insensibility and indolence, as in the 6th verse of this chapter, because it cannot be said, that those who are in *such* a state, live *together with* or to *Christ*. Nor can it mean natural sleep, as in verse the 7th, as, I think, any one that attentively considers the passage will allow. It must, therefore, mean *death*, which is very often termed *sleep*, in the language of this Apostle, particularly several times in the preceding chapter. This being granted, (as it must,) it follows that those who *sleep* or *die* in the Lord, still *live together with him*; viz. in a separate state. And, therefore, when he comes, he is said (chap. iv. 14,) to *bring them with him*."

The author very properly avails himself of our Lord's declaration to the penitent thief, and of the prayer addressed, in his last moments, by Stephen, to the Lord Jesus.

After fully accomplishing all he proposed to himself, in writing this essay, the author, near the conclusion of it, quotes Cicero and Seneca on the Immortality of the Soul. We select the following beautiful passage from the great Roman orator and philosopher:—

"Non enim is ego sum qui Animum simul cum homine interire putem, tantumque mentis lumen, Divinâ Naturâ delibatum, posse extinguere, sed potius, certo tempore emenso, ad immortalitatem redire."*

But confidently as Cicero speaks here, and as Seneca does, upon several occasions, the doctrine of the immortality of the soul was, with both the one and the other, abundantly more a matter of *opinion* and *hope* than of *certainty*. But life and immortality having been brought to light by the Gospel, we have the authority of divine testimony to *assure* us of the soul's immortality.

In the forenoon of the 12th of October, after having preached in the morning with much enlargement of heart, Mr. Benson was highly gratified at church in hearing Mr. Barker. At a love-feast, which he held in the afternoon, he had the pleasure of meeting his excellent friend, Dr. Hamilton, who, he says, "preached a good sermon in the evening, from

* "I am not one that can think the soul perishes together with the man, (the body,) or that so much light of understanding, which hath a tincture of the Divine Nature, can possibly be extinguished, but rather that, having spent the time assigned it, it returns to immortality."

‘Look unto me, all ye ends of the earth.’ I trust that some of the good seed sown this evening will bring forth fruit.”

A sort of Jubilee was held at Hull on the 5th November, in commemoration of the arrival of William Prince of Orange; an event which took place a hundred years before. To those who are tolerably acquainted with history, and true friends to civil and religious liberty, that occurrence must appear to be one of the extraordinary providential events recorded in the annals of the world. In what a wretched and divided state were the inhabitants of this country at that remarkable period! King James, in opposition to his wary counsellors at Rome, by his foolish and violent measures, precipitated his own fall from one of the first thrones on earth to the degraded state of living upon the bounty of a foreign prince, and taking his rank amongst Jesuits.

Perhaps there was not another man in the world so thoroughly fitted for the delicate and difficult task he took in hand, as William. By his admirable wife, who, in addition to her eminent piety, possessed a mind sufficiently capacious and correct for the founding of an empire, he was powerfully assisted in the performance of the arduous duties attached to the regal office. She spurned the idea of degrading William, her beloved, prudent, and heroic husband, into the place of a subject, though the first in the kingdom. Nor, indeed, had she been otherwise minded, would William have submitted to such a degradation. In placing him upon the throne of England, many providences concurred, which tend to elucidate this passage of Scripture, “God is the judge; he putteth down one, and lifteth up another.” To that event, under God, we are indebted for the inestimable privileges of a civil and religious nature, which have raised us superior to every other nation in the world.

Mr. Benson informs us, that, on the day referred to, the Methodists at Hull held two religious meetings, the one in the morning, and the other in the afternoon.

When we consider Mr. Benson’s manly sense, learning, general knowledge, piety, and zeal, we are disposed to think, that wherever he visited, crowds would attend his ministry. This we know was generally the case; but under date December 4, he gives an account of an exception.—“I was much exercised in my mind to-night to find so few at the preaching. What can be done for this most ignorant and wicked people to do them good? I find they can neither *relish* nor *bear* my preaching.”

Of the conclusion of the year, he says, “It being the last day in the year, we concluded it with a watch-night; and though it was exceedingly cold, continued the meeting till twelve o’clock, that we might introduce the new year. May it be spent to his glory! I preached on, ‘Account the long-suffering of our Lord salvation.’ May I be enabled to do so!”

January 4, 1789, we find an account of the general divisions of a sermon, preached by Mr. Benson, from Gen. xlvii. 9. He says, "I showed,—1. That life is a pilgrimage. 2. That our days in this pilgrimage are few and evil. 3. I inquired into the cause of this. And 4. Whether and how far the evil admits of a cure."

The wisest and best of men upon earth are not wholly exempt from speculative errors. That Mr. Benson occupied a place in the first rank of the wise and good, will not be disputed by any possessed of a competent knowledge of his history; and yet, in our opinion, on the 9th of February, he erroneously apprehended the approach of some grievous trial, from the circumstance of his being unusually happy in God. We say, with the utmost deference to his superior sense and piety, *erroneously*; for what connection does there subsist betwixt an extraordinary portion of divine comfort and the approach of a calamity? That the most devout upon earth are sometimes severely tried does not admit of a dispute; but it does not follow that any portion of divine joy with which they may be favoured, forms any ground for their apprehending the approach of any trial. It is possible for them, after having been unusually happy in God, to notice, for a few times, that not long after they were severely tried, and so to blend the idea of present extraordinary comfort with that of approaching misery, as to render it impossible for them ever after to break the association. We would not insinuate, that the Lord *never* prepares any of his people for suffering by previously granting them strong consolation; but would simply maintain, that the *latter* does not *imply* the former. The passage referred to, which gave rise to these observations, runs thus: "I was so much comforted in the Lord, and found such nearness to him last Saturday, that I thought I should be called to endure some heavy trial."

On the 16th of March, which was a day of thanksgiving, on account of the recovery of his late Majesty from that distressing malady into which he afterwards relapsed, and under the power of which he remained so many years, Mr. Benson, who cordially loved his King and country, preached at Hull, from Deut. xxxiii. 26, &c. "O," says he, "that we may learn, as a nation, instead of illuminations, &c. to show our gratitude to the Lord, by giving him thanks and doing good."

In the morning of April 12, being Easter-day, he preached at Hull, from 1 Pet. i. 3. The following judicious method is that in which he treated the subject: "1. That had it not been for the resurrection of Christ, the door of hope with respect to future happiness, must have been shut against all mankind. 2. That through his resurrection, that door is thrown open to all men. 3. That true believers have really entered in at that door, and are begotten again to a lively hope. 4. The holy and happy state of such."

Having for several months been engaged in writing a Treatise on Christ's Divinity, Mr. Benson, on the 15th of May, thus expresses himself upon the subject, "Blessed be the Lord, I have now finished the difficult task I have had in hand. I find my mind greatly lightened of a load of care and fear, lest I should err from the truth upon so weighty a subject."

The work here referred to, is styled "A Rational Vindication of the Catholic Faith, being the first Part of a Vindication of Christ's Divinity." It was begun by the late Rev. JOHN FLETCHER, but left in a very imperfect state; and at Mrs. Fletcher's request, revised and finished by Mr. Benson. It consists of two hundred and twenty-eight pages, no more than fifty of which were written by Mr. Fletcher, who inscribed it to Dr. Priestley, whom he knew to have asserted, that the doctrine of the Trinity is irrational, and that the doctrine of our Lord's Divinity has no foundation in the Old or New Testament. In opposition to these opinions, which, if founded in truth, would render the Scriptures unworthy of a place amongst cunningly-devised fables, Mr. Fletcher took up his masterly pen, but did not live sufficiently long to finish what he had so ably begun.

At the 5th chapter, Mr. Benson took up the work, and showed, in opposition to Arianism and Socinianism, that the Apostles, after being fully illuminated, bore unequivocal testimony in favour of Christ's Divinity.

After quoting some passages from the beginning of St. John's Gospel, passages which prove, not only that Christ existed before all created things, but from eternity, and that he is, therefore, one in essence with the Father; Mr. Benson adds, "He is said by the Apostle to be God, not a titular god, or a god by office, a governor, surely; for there was then no creature for him to govern, or with respect to whom he could bear the title, or sustain the office of a god, in that sense. He must, therefore, have been God, by partaking of real and proper Deity, in union with the Father, whose Word he was." He then proceeds thus: "This appears manifestly from the Apostle's assuring us, that 'all things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made,' (ver. 3;) and, in particular, (ver. 10,) that 'the world (viz. this world) was made by him;' it being certain, and allowed on all hands, that, as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews declares, he 'that built all things is God,' properly so, creating power being undoubtedly divine, if any power is so. See Rom. i. 20." This reasoning is conclusive; for to create required infinite power, and infinite power could not inhere in a finite subject.

In the next chapter the author shows, that the Apostles, possessed of plenary inspiration, apply to Christ many passages found in the Old

Testament, which were manifestly spoken of the only true God; and that they consider all the appearances of Jehovah, made to the Patriarchs and Prophets of old, to be made in his person.

The author, at page 92, says, "It is the constant testimony of the Apostles, that the Father, in his own proper person, by which we are to understand, perhaps, the simple divine essence, never was seen by man. 'No man hath seen God at any time:' (John i. 18, and 1 John iv. 12;) 'The King eternal, immortal, and invisible;' (1 Tim. i. 17:) 'Who only hath immortality, dwelling in light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see.' (1 Tim. vi. 16.) These declarations are confirmed by our Lord: 'Not that any man hath seen the Father.' And yet it is manifest, from divers passages of the Old Testament, that a person did appear, at sundry times, to the Patriarchs and Prophets of old, who styled himself the 'God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of Israel, the true God.' "

From the names given to Christ by the inspired writers, and their ascribing to him those perfections which cannot, without blasphemy as well as absurdity, be applied to any created being, the author infers, and that justly, his proper Godhead.

After having, in the 8th chapter, shown at some length, that the Apostles represent Christ as the author of all the divine works, Mr. Benson dilates upon several of them in his very best manner. From this highly interesting part of the work, we give the following extract:

"Has man, that master-piece of divine workmanship, engaged our attention? Have we considered the wonderful structure of his body? the more astonishing formation of his mind? Have we observed his erect form? his exact proportions? his comely figure? his divine face? his majestic appearance? Have we marked the number and variety of his senses and members? how suited to each other, and to his state and place upon the earth, and his rank among the creatures? Have we reflected upon their contrivance and usefulness, and upon the pleasure and profit arising from each in particular, and from all in general? Have we observed the multiplicity of parts employed in the structure of each member or sense, and their happy union, in forming one perfect whole? Have we examined the eye or ear? the hand or foot? the head or heart?" In a style not less masterly, the author proceeds to notice the nutrition and growth of the human body; the veins and arteries ministering to the circulation of the blood; the nervous system; the structure of the brain, &c.

Then, turning his attention to man's better part, he says, "Have we noticed a spirit in man? a soul in body? a mind in matter? an intelligent and free principle? a power that perceives, thinks, reasons, judges, approves, condemns, wills, desires, loves, hates, hopes, fears, rejoices, mourns? that pervades the earth, encompasses the heavens, measures

the sun, ascends above the stars, rises from the creature to the Creator, beholds his glory, admires his beauty, feels his love, tastes his pleasures, imitates his perfections, and aspires after a conformity to him, and fellowship with him, through everlasting ages?"

In the 9th chapter, the author proves, that Jesus Christ is the Redeemer and Saviour of mankind. This, he makes appear, would be impossible, upon the supposition that he is not God as well as man.

Having considered Christ as the universal Judge, for which office, as a *mere man*, or even an angel, he would be utterly unqualified, the author proceeds to show, that divine worship has been, is, and must be paid to him. In doing this, he found no difficulty; nor does he, in any part of the work, more fully prove the absurdity of those who profess to believe the Scriptures, and, at the same time, contend, that the doctrine of Christ's Divinity is not founded in truth.

Some of the principal objections against the doctrine of our Lord's Divinity are satisfactorily answered in the 13th chapter; and in the next, with which the work concludes, we find an instructive account of the uses which ought to be made of this doctrine.

Throughout the whole of this performance, no more than a few parts of which we have noticed, the author appears to have been thoroughly acquainted with his subject.

On the 3d of June, Mr. Benson was agreeably surprised, on his return to Hull from the country, to find that his sister and her son had come from Durham to pay him and his family a visit. Of his sister he says, "I was exceedingly struck to find what a change a few years had made in her. She looks as old, I think, as my mother did when I left home. Alas! what is human life! How vain! how fleeting! how insignificant! unless spent for the glory of God, and with a reference to eternity!"

The 12th of July was to Mr. Benson a day of great temptation. "I know not," he observes, "when I was more harassed with reasonings than I was last night and all this day; and chiefly about what texts I should preach from. May the Lord deliver me from this temptation, and enable me to look more to him for direction and help."

On his way to the Conference, which was held this year at Leeds, he preached at Pocklington and York, and on the 26th of August, at Seacroft in the afternoon, and in the evening at Thorner; where he says, "I was much comforted among many of my old friends. May I meet them in glory!"

Having had strong invitations from the principal members of the Society at Manchester, to labour once more in their Circuit, and Mr. Wesley having consented that he should; Mr. Benson was surprised, on hearing the stations of the Preachers read in Conference, to find himself appointed for York. His old friends at Stockport, among whom he

laboured when that town made a part of the Manchester Circuit, were anxious to be favoured once more with his able and faithful ministry. He raised some objections against being sent to either of those Circuits; chiefly because neither of them afforded so large a field for his exertions as he desired. "After some consideration," he observes, "I consented to go to Birmingham, knowing that there I should have a large field in which to labour." The care of that Circuit was committed to him; and three Preachers were appointed his helpers.

At an early period of the Conference, he addressed from the pulpit, a very large congregation of Preachers and people. The subject of his discourse was highly appropriate, viz. Ezek. xxxiii. 7—9; and though he had slept none the preceding night, he was enabled to acquit himself upon the occasion in a manner worthy of himself. Reflecting upon what he had said of the duties of a Minister, and earnestly desirous to practise what he preached, he writes, "May the Lord enable me to be what I have recommended others to be,—a faithful and diligent watchman!"

In the afternoon of August 2, having walked to Hunslet, he preached in the street to a huge congregation, on John xxi. 17. "Lovest thou me?" While he discoursed upon that subject, which seems with him to have been a favourite one, the tears of many evinced that he did not preach in vain. Having dismissed the congregation he hastened to Leeds, in order to hear Mr. Wesley. On his arrival in that town he met hundreds returning, for whom there was no room in the chapel. With difficulty he pressed so far as to be able to hear him; but as soon as the sermon was concluded, finding that many hundreds were on the ground who had in vain attempted to gain admission, and knowing that many had come several miles for that purpose; after having sung and prayed, he preached in the open air, from Luke xiii. 24, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." "I trust," says he, "that the Divine blessing attended the word, and that it was made an instrument of alarming and stirring up the minds of many."

With the true zeal of a Christian Missionary, he embraced every opportunity that offered, whether in his own or any other Circuit, for the purpose of proclaiming the doctrines of the Gospel. Hence, instead of relinquishing his wonted public labours, in order to enjoy the sweets of religious and social intercourse amongst his pious and intelligent friends at Leeds, even for a few days previous to his repairing to his new appointment; we find that he preached at Birstal, Morley, and other places, to large congregations.

After devoting a great part of August 10, to the pleasing and profitable work of visiting several Christian friends at Leeds, he preached in the evening to a large audience. On the following day he arrived at Sheffield, where he found a large congregation assembled; and imme-

diately going into the pulpit, he addressed them with much liberty, and apparently good effect.

On the 15th of August, he says, "On Wednesday night I preached at Rotherham; on Thursday at Sheffield; on Friday at Whitely-Wood; and on Saturday again at Rotherham." He adds, "I hope this visit will not be in vain to this neighbourhood." Thus, in the true spirit of a man, on whose mind eternal realities made a due impression, wherever he sojourned, though for ever so short a time, he laid out his strength in order to promote the spread of genuine Christianity.

Having preached three times in the town and neighbourhood of Sheffield, on the 16th of August he says, "The congregations have been exceedingly large, and I have been favoured with much liberty." After having left Sheffield on the 17th of August, he says, "I took my leave of this affectionate people, by preaching from Jacob's vow, and recommending them all to seek the Divine presence in preference to every thing else; and as to temporal things, to be content with food to eat, and raiment to put on."

In consequence of an unforeseen delay, previous to their leaving Sheffield, Mr. Benson and his family did not arrive at Birmingham till between nine and ten at night. Several friends who waited their arrival at the inn where they put up, conducted them to their new habitation; which, says Mr. Benson, "we found to be pleasingly situated quite at the outside of the town."

Entered upon his new Circuit, he resolved, in the strength of God, by increased diligence in the performance of every duty attached to his sacred office, to "make full proof of his ministry." On the 23d of August, he says, "The congregations have been large, and I trust a Divine blessing has attended the word."

Having read a part of "The Reformed Pastor," on the 3d and 10th of September, he says, "I found great nearness to the Lord, and a strong desire to be faithful to my call, and devoted to his glory. May my desire be fulfilled!"

The excellent work here referred to, was written by Baxter, when about forty years of age. What true dignity of character must he have possessed at so comparatively an early age, to be able, with a good grace, to point out, in language so plain, the duties of a Christian Pastor, and reprehend the conduct of such Ministers, as did not take heed to themselves and to all the flock entrusted to their care! The principle of the work is excellent; and the plan it contains, for ministers *personally* to instruct *all* over whom they are appointed to watch, though, from an increase of population, and other causes, not generally practicable in this age; may still be referred to with great advantage by such Ministers as would be pure from the blood of all men.

After preaching, about this time, at Wednesbury in the morning and afternoon, Mr. Benson set out for Bromwich, but found it difficult to pass through the town, in consequence of the crowds collected to see a bull baited. On the 9th of September, he returned to Wednesbury, where he says, "I found the wretched inhabitants, about the same devilish sport, viz. bull-baiting." He adds, "A few people, however, came to the chapel, and I found a measure of comfort in speaking to them."

Though Mr. Benson had not slept more than about five minutes during the night of September 13, yet in the course of the next day he preached three times, read prayers once, and gave tickets to about one hundred individuals. On a review of the labours of the day, we find that so far from glorying in himself, or attributing to second causes either the mental or bodily strength with which he had been favoured, his language is, "I bless the Lord, he has enabled me to go through the many labours of the day without much weariness."

That Mr. Benson, at an early period of his ministry, without becoming heterodox, speculated rather too much on the blessed doctrine of the Trinity, his best friends feel no inclination to conceal. But, like some other pious men possessed of minds formed upon a superior scale, who found for a time considerable difficulties in the way of their believing that doctrine, as revealed in Scripture, without any qualifying definitions, but who afterwards embraced it without hesitation, as a doctrine divinely and clearly revealed; so he did, after various reasonings upon the subject. On October 13, he says, "I am more and more confirmed in the belief, that our Lord was the Son of God before his incarnation, and that the appellation is given to him in a sense not applicable to any creature. I found it very refreshing to my soul to view him in this light, and had a very comfortable sense of his willingness to save all that come to God by him."

At Wednesbury, on the morning of November 1, while Mr. Benson dwelt upon the subject of Moses interceding with God for the people of Israel, after their having made the golden calf and worshipped it, both himself and the congregation were much affected. At noon he was not favoured with his wonted liberty while preaching; but in the evening, when he possessed much freedom of spirit, he was prevented from enlarging by bodily indisposition. "Alas!" he remarks, "what poor creatures we are, when God lays his hand upon us! How true it is that all flesh is grass! Lord, prepare me for my latter end, and sanctify my afflictions to me!"

The two following days, being so indisposed as to be unable to preach, Mr. Benson employed himself in reading and writing. Among other things, he read Gilbert West's "Observations on the Resurrection of

Christ;" which he pronounces a most excellent performance, one that is "a demonstration of the truth of Christianity."

To those who imagine that a preacher of the Gospel, after becoming thoroughly acquainted with his subject, never feels any more difficulty in discussing it in public, than an able Counsellor does in pleading a point of law before a Court of Justice, part of the following paragraph will appear unintelligible.

"November 26. I had not much liberty in preaching, either this or the preceding night. But I endeavour to leave the matter with God, to whom it belongs to open our mouths or to shut them; and who alone can render the best discourse useful, and who can bless the worst."

These scriptural views of the necessity of divine agency, in order to preach to any valuable purpose, Mr. Benson never abused to the purpose of neglecting to make due preparation for the pulpit.

After informing us that the 7th of December was to him a day of joy and gladness, he mentions his having read a little tract termed, "Conjectures concerning the Nature of future Happiness," translated from the French of Bonnet, of Geneva. Of this tract he speaks in strong terms of approbation; and no wonder, for it is probably one of the most sensible works upon the subject that have ever appeared in any language. Were it generally known, it would have a constant circulation amongst those who join to the piety of Christians the understanding of men.

Of how Mr. Benson ended the old year, he gives the following account. "This being the last day of the year, we concluded it with a watch-night. The congregation was very large, and hardly any went away till we broke up. I hope many will have cause to remember the opportunity."

At Birmingham, on the morning of the 1st of January, 1790, Mr. Benson conducted a meeting at Cherry-street chapel, for singing and prayer. At two o'clock in the afternoon he preached for what he calls the Union Society; and in the evening he delivered a discourse on the subject of Christians' renewing their covenant with God. "After preaching," says he, "the society met, and we endeavoured to dedicate ourselves to the Lord in a solemn manner." He adds, "I bless the Lord, my desire has been after him all this day, and it is my fixed determination to live to him alone. Lord, help me by thy power!"

To a man so well acquainted with divinity as Mr. Benson was, and who was continually adding to his stock of knowledge by reading and study, many would imagine no difficulty could occur at any time, in his making choice of a subject for the pulpit. Nor indeed would there, had he aimed at no more than merely to acquit himself as an orthodox, able, and judicious Preacher; but his aim was much higher: it was no less

than to be an instrument of saving souls from death; and hence his anxiety, upon many occasions, to suit his discourses to the various congregations he had to address, in order to effect that purpose. "On the 24th of January," he says, "I gave so much way to reasonings about the choice of texts to preach from at Darliston at noon, and at Wednesbury in the evening, that I brought my mind into very great perplexity; so that I had a most uncomfortable time in preaching at Darliston. At Wednesbury, in the evening, my mind was more at liberty: yet still I was far from being comfortable."

After his mental and bodily exertions throughout the day, such was the uneasiness of his mind, that he could sleep none through the succeeding night. The consequence of this was bodily indisposition the following day; but still, unsubdued by a degree of illness which would have justified his not appearing in the pulpit, he preached, in the evening, at Bromwich. "In preaching," says he, "I was much assisted, and I trust many were blessed under the discourse."

From this period till the 10th of February, his mind was sometimes exceedingly happy, and at other times much depressed. His sufferings, equally with his comforts, he received as from the hand of God; and hence they were sanctified to his profit. He lived by faith, and conducted himself as a stranger and pilgrim upon earth.

After mentioning, in terms of the warmest gratitude, the divine assistance with which he was favoured about this time, he thus expresses himself:—"O that I could more fully believe the Lord's promises, and obey his commands, that, like Abraham, I may obey, and go out, though, in some sense, not knowing whither I go. O that by faith I may sojourn on earth as in a strange country, and continually look for a city that hath foundations! Lord, help me by thy grace, and endue me more and more with a spiritual mind!"

From a partial view of what Mr. Benson occasionally says on the subject of his uneasiness before, during the time of, and after preaching, one would be disposed to imagine that his pulpit exercises in general were attended with little or no comfort to himself; and that he would engage in them as seldom as possible. But this was far from being the case; for when on the 14th of February a stranger preached twice for him, he says, "I have not felt my mind at all easy or satisfied, that I have preached so little to-day. However, I seemed providentially shut out from what I can truly say is not a drudgery but a pleasure; and therefore endeavoured to be resigned."

Having slept none on the night of the 20th of February, Mr. Benson, though considerably indisposed, went through the usual labours of the following day. "I was," he observes, "assisted much in preaching every time, especially at Coleshill-Street, and in the evening at Cherry-

Street. O that I could trust in the Lord more, and be resigned to his will in all things!"

Mr. Wesley being at Stourport, Mr. Benson, accompanied by Mr. Walker, rode to meet him there, on the 18th of March. "We found him," Mr. Benson says, "much stronger and better, considering that he is in his eighty-seventh year, than we expected. His sight is so defective, that he is much at a loss in giving out hymns, in reading his text, and in referring to any portion of Scripture. In conversation he seems much as usual, lively and entertaining."

Mr. Benson and Mr. Walker conducted Mr. Wesley to Birmingham on the 19th of March. "In the evening at Birmingham he preached," says Mr. Benson, "a good sermon from 'Awake thou that sleepest,' &c. to a very crowded congregation." After mentioning that Mr. Wesley's congregations were excessively thronged at both the chapels, and that many who came to hear him could not get into either of them; he adds, "I hope some have been profited by what they have heard; as to myself, I seldom receive any profit in such times of hurry and dissipation. I am glad that this is over."

The hurry and dissipation of which he complains, were occasioned by the crowds which, during the latter part of Mr. Wesley's life, followed him wherever he went. A man about eighty-seven years of age, who preached twice or thrice a day; who carried on an extensive correspondence; and who conversed with all the ease and cheerfulness of a man in the meridian of life, was a sort of phenomenon which attracted the attention of all ranks and degrees of men. As to Mr. Wesley himself, he was no more hurried nor dissipated in the midst of crowds, than when shut up in his study.

Few females, if any, have ever been more justly famed for every Christian virtue, than Mrs. Fletcher. With that saint of God, and her ever-to-be-revered husband, Mr. Benson was intimately acquainted; nay, he and they were united by the strongest ties of Christian friendship. Of that truly excellent pair, Mr. Benson, in the following paragraph, gives some account.

"Madeley, May 26. In the forenoon I rode hither to see the pious widow of my much-esteemed friend Mr. Fletcher. I found her, if possible, more devoted to God, and filled with his love, than ever. And what a pattern for good works, and those of all kinds, done to the bodies and souls of men! What a couple were they! and how mysterious the Providence that separated them!" Having thus spoken of his two excellent friends, he adds, "I preached in the evening in the barn she has fitted up for a preaching-house. It will hold about three hundred hearers; it was thoroughly filled, and we had a refreshing season together. The Rev. Mr. Horne and Gilbert were with us, and Mr. Hill, a brother of Sir Richard Hill."

Mr. John Murlin, whom Mr. Myles, in his *Chronological History of the Methodists*, ranks amongst the first race of Methodist Preachers, being at Birmingham on the 27th of June, Mr. Benson had an opportunity of hearing him preach. "He is," says Mr. Benson, "a solid and pious man, and a truly judicious and useful preacher."

On recollecting the names and history of the first race of Methodist Preachers, a solitary individual of whom is not now found upon the earth, the tear of affection starts into our eye; and we cannot avoid exclaiming, "Our fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?" The late venerable Thomas Taylor, who entered the field of itinerancy in 1761, seems for some years to have survived all his first companions in the ministry. At a Conference, a few years before his death, when the Preachers were called to take their places by seniority, and such as had entered the work in 1761 were desired to take the first place; he stood up, and in a manner not easily to be forgotten, said, "Here I am, the only surviving preacher of that year; God be merciful to me!"

The ranks of the second race of Preachers, which Mr. Myles reckons from 1766 till 1790, are thinning fast; amongst the first of these stood for half a century the pious, learned, and laborious subject of this Memoir. And in the course of a few years, not a Preacher will remain of all who had the honour and pleasure of being personally acquainted with the venerable Founder of Methodism.

Mr. Benson set off from Birmingham on the 24th of July for Bristol. After mentioning his being rather unwell, in consequence of not being able to sleep in the coach, he adds, "But blessed be the Lord, my mind has been kept in peace, and I find a degree of confidence in God and nearness to him."

Though feverish through the preceding night, in the course of which he slept very little, he preached abroad at Bristol, on the evening of July 25, to a large congregation near the Chapel in Guinea-Street, from Rev. xx. 12. "All," says he, "seemed to hear with seriousness and attention, and to some, I trust, the word came with power."

The stations of the Preachers having been read in Conference on the 31st of July, he mentions with approbation his re-appointment for Birmingham; and adds, "Hitherto our Conference has been very peaceable, and the Preachers have used much freedom and apparent uprightness in speaking to, and reproving each other."

The Conference was concluded on the 4th of August, about noon, with the Lord's Supper. "I found it," Mr. Benson observes, "a profitable time. My soul was much drawn out after God, and I was favoured with great nearness to him. I gave myself up afresh to him; and I trust that he will bless me more this year than the last. May he endow me with a larger measure of his Spirit!"

We find that on the 5th of August, Mr. Benson arrived at Birmingham, on his return from Conference. On the 8th of August he says, "I had a quiet and comfortable day in hearing several of my brethren. I was particularly pleased and edified in hearing old Mr. H——, a most pious man, and, I am sure, a solid, judicious, and edifying Preacher."

Mr. Benson's youngest child, who had suffered extremely for about ten weeks, and was reduced to a skeleton, died on the 13th of August. "I find," he remarks, "much thankfulness to the Lord, that he has released it from its misery, and taken it to himself. We have now two children, a son and a daughter, in glory. May the Lord give his grace to the four that are still graciously left us !"

The circumstance of his having to preach no more than twice on the 12th of September, he mentions as a singular incident. "But I found," says he, "much liberty both times. At Coleshill-Street, while I was enlarging on the steps by which Peter fell, and was restored, many were much affected. In the evening, the subject was the Parable of the Sower; in explaining which, I endeavoured to show what were the chief hinderances of our bearing fruit."

After having, about this time, met all the classes in the town of Birmingham, Mr. Benson says, "I have reason to hope there is a very gracious work going on among the people. Many are added, and many are truly alive to God." On the 26th of September, he preached no less than thrice, and met all the classes at Wednesbury and Darliston. In both those places, he had the pleasure to find the work of the Lord in a state of prosperity.

The doctrine of the immortality of the soul, now that it is revealed, is found highly rational; but it is more than probable, that unassisted reason never could arrive at certainty on the subject. A firm belief in the being and attributes of God, would lead us, from the opinion we form of the unequal distribution of rewards and punishments in this world, to conclude, that, in another, matters must be adjusted in consistency with those attributes. But could we ever imagine, if unrevealed, that endless duration would be necessary, in order to the perfection of that adjustment? We conceive not; and, therefore, without rejecting any argument reason may urge in favour of the doctrine of the soul's immortality, we found our belief of that doctrine upon its being clearly and fully revealed in the Oracles of God. It is by the Gospel, and not by "reason's glimmering ray," that life and immortality are brought to light.

When, on the 7th of October, Mr. Benson chose the doctrine of the immortality of the soul for the subject of his meditation, instead of bewildering himself with metaphysical subtleties, he had recourse to the sure word of testimony. "I walked out," says he, "a little both before and after dinner, and was much edified and comforted in meditating

upon many passages of Scripture, which prove the immortality of the soul. I think I never before had so clear a view of the subject. I could have meditated during the whole day upon it; and I regretted that I was obliged to quit it, and turn my attention to other subjects." On the following day, he observes, "I see more clearly than ever, that the soul only is the man; that the body is only its house, tabernacle, or clothing; and that personal identity depends on this; it being to all appearance, impossible that he should be the same intelligent conscious being at the resurrection, if he had no soul, or if it died with the body. But whether the same particles of matter that compose his present body be brought together, and formed into a new body or not; yet, if the same self-conscious mind or spirit subsist, he is the same man. May the Lord strengthen my faith in that Gospel which brings life and immortality to light!"

There are some propositions so plain in themselves as not to admit of a definition; for every definition, in order to deserve the name, must be more obvious than the thing defined. What is more obvious than that every man is *himself*, and always will continue to be so, and not *another*? Let the subject be thus proposed, and the common sense of an ignorant ploughman will enable him to answer the famous question, "Wherein consists personal identity?" To him the words *personal identity* are perfectly unintelligible; but he knows as well as those who have read and speculated most upon the subject, that he is *himself*, and not his *master*, nor any other being in the universe. A celebrated metaphysician, contrary to his general accuracy, maintains, that a man's personal identity consists in his being conscious that he is the same person. But this cannot be a just definition, as it confounds the knowledge of a thing with that thing itself. Our personal identity does not depend upon our being conscious that we are the same persons; for such we should be, whether conscious of our being so or not; but because we are the same persons, certain laws of our nature compel us, while in a state of mental sanity, to believe in the doctrine of our own personal identity.

Mr. Benson's having touched upon this subject must be our apology, if we need any, for making these observations.

While he preached in the afternoon of October 17, the power of God so accompanied his discourse, that many in the congregation were deeply affected, and some of them so much so, as to weep aloud.

Men equally ignorant of the operations of the Holy Spirit upon their own minds, and of the divine power, which frequently accompanies the preaching of the Gospel, are ready to maintain, that whenever people are much affected under a discourse, the Preacher chiefly dwells upon the terrors of the law. But this is so far from being the case, that people are seldom, if ever, so much affected, while listening to sermons

which abound with terror, as to those which dwell upon the “inestimable love of God in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ.” When, on the 17th of October, many were so deeply affected under Mr. Benson’s sermon, he was explaining and enforcing that gracious invitation, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.” On those who do not obey the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness, threatenings and promises are equally thrown away.

In occasionally mentioning those special times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, many of which are noticed in Mr. Benson’s Journal; we have neither time nor inclination to answer such objections as minute philosophers, who call themselves Christians, are in the habit of urging against all emotions of joy or sorrow on spiritual accounts. Gladly would such self-constituted censors divest themselves of all sense of moral obligation; but this they find impossible; for, however they may exert themselves to effect that purpose, “reflections upon the past” will repeatedly “throw their minds upon the future,” and give them to feel the truth of Bishop Butler’s assertion,—that punishments as well as rewards commence in the present world.

Devout readers of the Holy Scriptures are sometimes much comforted and encouraged by particular passages in the Sacred Volume, with which they have been long familiar, without having, at any former period, found the perusal of them attended by any such effects. How well acquainted with the whole of St. John’s Epistles, as well as Gospel, must Mr. Benson have been before the 26th of October, when a plain passage, in the first Epistle of that inspired writer, was greatly blessed to his edification and comfort! “This morning I read over the first Epistle of St. John with much attention and prayer, and was edified and comforted thereby. These words, in particular, ‘He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever,’ were delightful to my soul. I saw and felt how inconsistent they were with the doctrine of Materialism, and how certainly they implied the continued existence and immortality of the soul; it being manifestly absurd to say, that an intelligent being, such as man most certainly is, abides for ever, if he is wholly dissolved, and loses his intelligent nature, nay, loses all thought and consciousness, for a long run of ages. I bless the Lord, I found a persuasion in my mind, that I did, in some measure, the will of God, and a lively hope that I should abide for ever.”

In Birmingham, on the evening of November 11, Mr. Benson explained and enforced that striking passage in Matt. xii. 30; on which he makes the following observations: “I believe with Dr. Doddridge upon this text, that whatever use a man makes of his time and talents, if he does not gather with Christ, does not serve his cause, he is as idly employed as if he scattered his money, or any thing else that he has about him. But, in a farther sense, he that does not gain more knowledge and

grace, loses what he already has; and he that does not endeavour to bring souls to Christ, will certainly scatter souls from him."

It is natural to suppose, that many, on perusing Gilpin's Notes upon Mr. Fletcher's Portrait of St. Paul, would imagine that several of them are marked by the strong colouring of personal friendship. But Mr. Benson, who knew Mr. Fletcher long and well, thought differently. On the 20th of November, he remarks, "I have been pleased and profited in reading, these two or three mornings, a part of the Portrait of St. Paul by Mr. Fletcher, in French, and now translated and published by Mr. Gilpin; who, to each trait of St. Paul's character, has added one of Mr. Fletcher's, showing how happily he succeeded in copying after his original."

About this time, Mr. Benson suffered much from a very painful complaint, to which, for years, he had been subject. "My complaint," says he, "has increased much this week. I have suffered much pain, but I have been able to preach a little, and go through the duties of my office. I have, at times, found great nearness to the Lord in prayer, especially in secret; and my mind has been drawn out to cry to him for support under this affliction, and to bless it to my profit."

Among other proofs that Mr. Benson was eminently holy, may be ranked the delight he felt in his private devotions. In the faithful exercise of these, he derived much of that power from on high, which, joined to his uncommon talents, was the grand reason why his public labours were instrumental in producing so much effect.

Under date December 26, he thus writes: "I have been so ill as not to be able to preach, either yesterday or to-day. Indeed, for some days, I have hardly been able to read or write, my pain has been so great and constant; and frequently I have not been able to close my eyes all night. May the Lord, of his infinite mercy, support me under this painful and trying disorder!"

On the 31st of December, though still much afflicted, Mr. Benson expresses his gratitude to God, for strength sufficient to attend the watch-night at Cherry-Street, and to pray with the congregation. But, little as this exercise was, he could not go through it without considerable pain. Referring to his being able to do any thing upon the occasion, he, with the piety of a man who sees God in every dispensation of providence, whether prosperous or adverse, says, "In this I have reason to acknowledge, that the Lord heard and answered prayer, as I was very desirous to attend, and made it a matter of prayer that I might have strength for the purpose."

Finding himself a little better on the 9th of Jan. 1791, he preached three times; and he says, "I have been favoured with much liberty in speaking."

For about a fortnight after the above date, he seems to have been utterly unable to appear in public. On the 23d of January, he says, "I have been exceedingly ill for a fortnight past, hardly able to walk or stand, or even sit or lie. My pain has sometimes been for hours most excruciating. I have been sometimes racked and tortured all night without intermission, and, consequently, unable to close my eyes." It may be truly said, he was in the furnace of affliction; but there he was not burned, but purified; for God was with him. Having Omnipotence for his support, he did not faint in the day of adversity. His language was not that of impatience, but gratitude. "Hitherto," says he, "the Lord has supported me. May he continue to support me; and O that he may so sanctify this painful and trying dispensation, as to make it a lasting blessing to myself and family!"

Considerably recovered from his severe illness, Mr. Benson, on the 20th of February, had strength sufficient to enable him to preach three sermons. His own account of the labours of that day cannot fail to interest those pious and intelligent readers, who often sat under his able and powerful ministry. "In the morning, for the first time since I have been ill, I preached at Cherry-Street, on Heb. xii. 5—14, and found it, as, I believe, most that were present did, a remarkably blessed time. In the forenoon, at Coleshill Chapel, the congregation was much affected while I explained the account given by St. Paul of his sufferings, in 2 Cor. xi. 23—31. It was indeed a precious season. In the afternoon, I preached to a large and attentive congregation."

The venerable Founder of Methodism, who may be justly ranked amongst the greatest and the best of men that have lived, died in the full triumph of faith, on the 2d of March, 1791, aged eighty-eight years. This intelligence reached Mr. Benson on the following day; and, on referring to it, he says, "May the Lord sanctify the stroke, and make it a blessing to the numerous Societies that were in connexion with him! Alas! how soon is a life of eighty-eight years over! and how certain it is, that there is no wisdom but in living to God!"

After walking, on the 6th of March, to Deretend, in the vicinity of Birmingham, Mr. Benson preached from 2 Cor. vi. 1, &c. "Many," says he, "were much affected under the word, especially while I intimated, that many particulars in the passage were very applicable to our departed friend and father, Mr. Wesley." The congregation at Cherry-Street Chapel, on Sunday evening, March 13, that came to hear Mr. Benson preach a sermon, on account of Mr. Wesley's death, was immense. Many hundreds who came to hear could not get into the chapel. The text chosen for the occasion was very appropriate; 2 Kings ii. 12. "My Father! my Father! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!" Not having sufficient time to finish his discourse upon

that occasion, he deferred it till the 15th, when the chapel was again prodigiously crowded.

After having, about this time, seen the Earl of Dartmouth's house and gardens, and noticed a variety of exotic plants, birds, &c. Mr. Benson, quite in character with his habitual seriousness, observes, "But, alas! what are all these things to an immortal soul! Surely, they are nothing any farther than they lead the mind to the admiration and love of the First Great Cause of all these wondrous works."

Shortly after the death of Mr. Wesley, an event which, without affecting its doctrines, necessarily produced a sort of revolution in Methodism; many of the Preachers, but especially such as were of considerable standing, held meetings for the sake of consulting on the best mode to be adopted for the government of the Body at large, including both Preachers and people. This was a crisis, the result of which, human learning, wisdom, and piety united, could not possibly divine. Men of the world, who imagined Mr. Wesley, though a man of genius and learning, to be an enthusiast, who aimed at gratifying his ambition, by becoming the Founder of a Sect, prophesied that, upon his death, the union of the Methodist Body would be dissolved, and their whole economy, as a religious Society, annihilated. Even several men of piety, as well as sense, thought similarly upon the subject. But how defective has human foresight upon this, as upon other subjects, proved itself! Had the individuals, composing the Methodist Society, been united together for the purpose of acting upon sectarian or political principles, their dissolution, as a religious Body, would have been "a consummation devoutly to be wished," nor could it have been long retarded; but their union was founded upon Christian, and, consequently, catholic principles; and hence, notwithstanding the clashing opinions by which they have been a few times convulsed, especially after the death of their Founder, they stand at this day in the first rank of the most stable Christian communities in the world.

What energy of mind and zeal for God must Mr. Benson have possessed, to induce him frequently to preach, when labouring under bodily indisposition. We find that this was the case on the 8th of May. "However," says he, "I bless the Lord I have been able to preach three times, viz. once at Darliston, and twice at Wednesbury: in the evening I preached with a good measure of comfort."

Having briefly mentioned, with gratitude to God, the gracious assistance with which he had been favoured in the course of the day, we find him, instead of using the language of self-approbation, reproaching himself. "O! I am quite dissatisfied with myself, that I am not more spiritual in those exercises, whether preaching or praying, and that I do not worship the Father more in spirit and in truth. Lord, help me by

thy power, and purify me by thy grace, and enable me to serve thee acceptably in the Gospel of thy Son."

After devoting the greater part of the 17th and 18th of May to prayer and reading the Scriptures, Mr. Benson, conceiving that he had sometimes attempted to urge his reason beyond its proper limits, observes, "I purpose, by Divine grace, to reason less, and pray more." This resolution, we doubt not, he was enabled to put in practice; and consequently, without becoming less rational, he became more divine.

At the conclusion of May 22, he says, "I bless the Lord, I have been enabled to preach four times this day, and with much liberty every time." Having thus expressed himself, thoroughly persuaded that in the midst of great ministerial labours, a Preacher may decline in piety; and feeling that without Divine aid he could do nothing to good purpose, he remarks, "O, that I myself may be a doer of the word, and not a hearer or preacher only! Lord, help me by thy grace."

It frequently happened, when Mr. Benson had preached so long and so earnestly as one would imagine sufficient to exhaust the strength of any man, that he appeared to possess a more than ordinary share of physical strength, as well as mental and spiritual vigour. Often, about the close of his sermon, and during the last prayer, he was so endued with power from on high, that multitudes were so much affected as to be unable to contain themselves within the limits prescribed by those who would have a religion without feeling. On May 31, he says, "This evening at Cherry-Street I preached on Rom. v. 10. I was favoured with much freedom in speaking, and the congregation was deeply affected during the latter end of the sermon, and in the time of the last prayer. O, that these gracious seasons may be improved for God's glory and our profit."

It is generally no better than a loss of time to dispute with infidels; for if the many excellent and unanswerable works published in proof of the truth and certainty of Christianity leave them in a state of infidelity, how little can be expected from verbal controversy with them?

Their zeal in propagating their pernicious tenets is incompatible with good sense and benevolence. An infidel of good sense cannot but know that, supposing men to be left without Divine Revelation, "shadows, clouds, and darkness," envelope futurity. He knows and feels, that he is under moral government, nor can he, with the colour of reason, maintain that rewards and punishments are equally distributed in this life; and hence, unless he become a speculative atheist, which some suppose to be impossible; he must remain in a painful state of doubt with respect to his own final destiny. He may endeavour, but it will be in vain, to persuade himself, that his soul will perish with his body, and never more possess conscious existence; however, even that cure of his

misery, ("sad cure to be no more!") is far beyond his grasp. He is confessedly wretched; and his good sense gives him to see that it is unworthy the reason of a man to propagate opinions, even supposing them to be founded in truth, which have a direct and powerful tendency to produce misery in this world, without affording any ground to expect happiness in another.

But let us join to good sense, benevolence; for though infidels unhappily reject a well-attested Revelation, which breathes throughout the purest benevolence, yet they are men; nor is it, perhaps, possible for them, during their abode on earth, wholly to divest themselves of benevolence. Such infidels as are sensible and humane, know, that hope is the last refuge of sorrow; and, therefore, would not deprive any man in misery of the expectation of relief. And would not that good sense and humanity, which consult a man's comfort during the short span of his existence on earth, if suffered to operate, lead unbelievers to keep to themselves their gloomy and degrading notions? They affect to admire the morality of the New Testament, and may they not imagine that the doctrines of Christianity, which they unhappily disbelieve, are a sort of base ore which encloses to the vulgar the gold of Gospel morality? And as they allow that the practice of morality is highly favourable to the well-being of society, we might take it for granted, that they would not propagate sentiments which have a direct tendency to increase the sum of human misery. Does it not follow, that every infidel who endeavours to prove that Christianity has not truth for its basis, is either glaringly defective in good sense or benevolence. These observations are made to show, not that Christianity is no more than a hypothesis which men may safely reject, but that, even upon their own principles, such as do reject it, have no motive reconcilable to good sense or benevolence, to induce them to propagate their tenets.

Mr. Benson, on the 26th of June, tells us that he had a dispute with a Deist, who was a man of good sense and considerable learning, but an utter enemy to Christianity. "Though confuted over and over," says Mr. Benson, "he would not yield." This is not matter of surprise; for a thorough-paced infidel denies the *possibility* of proving the truth of Christianity. The fact that Christ rose from the dead, and on the truth of which every doctrine peculiar to the Christian scheme depends, he maintains to be incapable of proof; and that the joint testimony of ten thousand *unexceptionable* witnesses in proof of any other fact than a miracle, would, if brought to prove the resurrection of Christ, leave him in the full possession of his infidelity; for it is a leading article in his creed, that a miracle *cannot be proved*. But why not? An infidel can give no satisfactory reason; and yet cleaves as tenaciously to that palpable falsehood, which places a gulf betwixt him and Christianity, as if it were an intuitive truth. How inconsistent and absurd is infidelity!

As Mr. Benson was at Birmingham during the riots there in 1791, an extract from his account of them cannot fail to be acceptable to the reader.

"July 15. Yesterday, according to appointment, several gentlemen met at the Hotel in this town, with a view to commemorate the French Revolution. The mob collected and hissed them as they went in; and in the dusk of the evening, gathering together in greater numbers, they broke all the windows of the Hotel; and then hastening to Dr. Priestley's Meeting-house, in a little time burned it to the ground. They then proceeded to what is called the Old Meeting-House, and burned it likewise. This morning they set out for Dr. Priestley's house, which is about two miles from town, and burned it also, with all the furniture. The same destructive work they have pursued all this day, having destroyed Mr. Ryland's house, and Squire Taylor's with all the furniture, &c. It was an awful spectacle this evening to see from our windows the latter house in flames.

"16. All this day we have been in continual alarms. The mob reigns without control. The attack made upon them by the constables yesterday, has only inflamed them the more; and this day they are continuing their depredations. Hundreds of families are removing their property, and the whole town is in utter consternation. May the Lord be our defence and habitation!

"Sunday, July 17. A general joy has been diffused through the town this evening, on account of the arrival of some troops of Light-horse. It has been indeed a time of uncommon trial. The whole town and neighbourhood have been in a state of alarm both night and day. But blessed be the Lord, we have been preserved in peace. May we be more and more encouraged to trust in him, and live to his glory!"

In this short account we observe naked facts related without the least colouring from the writer's religious or political principles, with respect to which, he and Dr. Priestley were, on many important points, directly opposed to each other. This circumstance, he well knew, could afford no apology for an attack upon either the Doctor's person or property.

In the evening of Sunday, July 24, Mr. Benson, at the request of many of his Brethren who had come to attend the Conference at Manchester, preached in the Oldham-Street Chapel. "The congregation," says he, "was exceedingly large, indeed many could not get in; and the Lord was present with us, especially during the last prayer, when the congregation was exceedingly affected. I preached on Heb. xiii. 7, 'Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.'"

The feelings of the Preachers who assembled at that Conference on July 26, left like orphans, by the removal of their venerable Father in

the Gospel, to whom they had all looked up with reverence and filial affection, may be more easily conceived than expressed.

Never before had the task of choosing a President devolved upon them; Mr. Wesley having presided in every Conference, in virtue of his right as the Founder of Methodism. In the year 1785, he wrote a letter to the Conference, to be read at their first meeting after his death. In a Life of Mr. Benson, who for half a century was one of the brightest ornaments of the Methodist Connexion, the omission of that letter would be inexcusable. The following, which is an exact copy of it, will discover what Mr. Wesley judged essential to the prosperity of Methodism.

“TO THE METHODIST CONFERENCE.

“Chester, April 7, 1785.

“Dear Brethren,

“Some of our Travelling Preachers have expressed a fear that after my decease you would exclude them either from preaching in Connexion with you, or from some other privileges which they enjoy. I know no other way to prevent this inconvenience, than to leave these my last words with you.

“I beseech you, by the mercies of God, that you never avail yourselves of the Deed of Declaration to assume any superiority over your Brethren; to have no respect to persons, in stationing the Preachers, in choosing Children for Kingswood-School, in disposing of the Yearly Contribution, and the Preachers’ Fund, or any other public money, but do all things with a single eye, as I have done from the beginning. Go on thus, doing all things without prejudice or partiality, and God will be with you to the end.

“JOHN WESLEY.”

After this letter was read, the following paragraphs were entered into the Minutes of the Conference:—

“N. B. The Conference have unanimously resolved, that all the Preachers in full connexion with them, shall enjoy every privilege that the members of the Conference enjoy; agreeably to the above written letter of our venerable deceased Father in the Gospel.

“It may be expected, that the Conference would make some observations on the death of Mr. Wesley; but they feel themselves utterly unable to express their ideas and feelings on this awful and affecting event.

“Their souls do truly mourn for their great loss; and they trust they shall give the best proof of their veneration for the memory of their esteemed Father and Friend, by endeavouring, with great humility and diffidence, to follow and imitate him in doctrine and life.”

At this Conference, the excellent plan devised for dividing the Circuits into Districts was adopted. Since that Conference was held, the Methodists, independent of those in the United States of America, have increased in number from 79,001, to 263,868; and if to these we add the 281,146 members of Society under the care of the American Conferences, the total number of members in the Wesleyan Methodist Societies throughout the world, exclusive of Travelling Preachers, now amounts to 545,014; which proves an increase of 408,392 members since the death of Mr. Wesley.

To the blessed effect produced by Mr. Benson's sermon, already mentioned, may, in a considerable degree, be attributed the peace and harmony which prevailed in this Conference. On the grand leading principles, calculated to secure the unity of the Methodist body, no difference of opinion seemed then to exist amongst the Preachers. The very few Preachers now living, who attended that Conference, or were in the Connexion when it was held, will recollect many veterans among their brethren, men of renown, who rest from their labours; and by the tender recollection of former days and former associates, their hearts will be deeply affected. They are rapidly following their "old companions;" nor will there, in the course of a few years, be found a man on earth able to say, that he ever saw an individual who ranked amongst the first race of Methodist Preachers. May every future race emulate their early predecessors in every thing, not only essential to, but ornamental of, the ministerial character! Let this be the case, and the Methodists, equally famed for charity and orthodoxy, will continue a truly Christian and increasing people, till the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ.

Mr. Benson's numerous friends at Middleton, Rochdale, and Oldham, being extremely desirous to see and hear him once more; he, on the 31st of July, preached at each of those places. In the morning, at nine o'clock, he preached at Middleton to a large congregation. "The Lord," he says, "was present with us, and the people were exceedingly affected." His congregation at Rochdale, to which he preached early in the afternoon, was crowded and attentive; and in the evening, at Oldham, while discoursing on "There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth," &c. the congregation was very much affected. "I hope," says he, "many will have reason as long as they live to remember this day."

After hearing Mr. Rutherford preach in the morning of Sunday, August 7, and Dr. Coke in the forenoon, he visited his friends at Stockport, where he preached twice to very large congregations. With several of his old friends in that town, he spent some happy hours in profitable conversation.

At four o'clock in the afternoon of Aug. 9, he arrived at Birmingham, where he had the happiness to find Mrs. Benson and all his children well. "May I," says, "be enabled to praise the Lord for his goodness, and live more than ever to his glory!"

Of the sober and pious uses to which Mr. Benson turned whatever particularly engaged his attention, we find numberless instances in his Journal. One occurs under date August 26. "Having a little time before preaching, I went out with two friends to see Shenstone's Walks. They are, indeed, very rural; and with grottos, rivers, streams, nymphs, water-falls, images, inscriptions, and the many varied scenes and delightful prospects, seem to transport one into the ancient Arcadia. But, alas! what are they now to the poet that contrived them, and expended so much money in laying them out, and bringing them to perfection! Alas! poor man, he was cut off in the prime of life, and did not live any length of time to enjoy the fruit of his toil and labour. Such are the most esteemed and admired earthly possessions!"

The relation in which we stand to God, as a part of his rational offspring, affords us ground of encouragement; and such a ground as, perhaps, is rarely adverted to by the generality of Christians. As we are fallen creatures, it is readily admitted, that it is in consequence of our being ransomed by Christ Jesus, we receive every blessing. But still, this does not affect our relationship to God, as a part of his offspring. In a sermon, preached by Mr. Benson, at Birmingham, he touched upon this subject. "This evening," he observes, "I found my mind much enlarged in preaching from Rom. xv. 13, 'Now the God of hope,' &c. It appeared to me that there was much implied in that phrase, 'The God of hope;' for, in the nature and attributes of God, and in the relation in which he is pleased to stand to his people, there is a most blessed foundation laid for the most glorious hopes to his rational offspring."

It is matter of regret, that, in many places, after a great out-pouring of the Spirit of God, many, who, for a time, made a profession of piety, turn back to the ways of sin and folly. This too general falling away may be attributed to several causes; but chiefly to men's proneness, even after conversion, to seek their happiness in created good; to the great ignorance of some, who become subjects of a work of grace; and to the want of sufficient and suitable personal instruction. All these causes probably conspired to produce the declension from the ways of piety mentioned by Mr. Benson, under date September 30. After saying that he had preached at Wednesbury and at Darliston, he adds, "I was sorry to find, that most of the children and young persons, that had apparently set out in the way to heaven, had turned back. May the Lord be pleased to revive his work amongst this ignorant, wicked, and abandoned people!"

Alive to the best interests of the flock, over which the Holy Ghost had made him an overseer, Mr. Benson, on learning that some in the Society had embraced the reveries of Baron Swedenburg, deemed it his duty, on the evening of October 25, to preach on "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines," &c.

On the afternoon of October 28, he says, "I called upon Mrs. —, and endeavoured to convince her, that she had embraced a system (if the Baron's doctrine can be called by that name) of the most unscriptural, irrational, and ridiculous notions. But she seems too deeply immersed in the doctrine to be soon reclaimed. How infectious is error! And how certain it is that there is no error too absurd for the poor and bewildered mind of man to imbibe!"

That the Baron, who was a maniac of an extraordinary description, should believe absurdities, which never found their way into the disturbed imagination of ordinary minds, however deranged, is not surprising; but that so many who rank among the same part of mankind should swallow his absurdities, is truly matter of astonishment. They must be either strangely defective in common sense, or grossly ignorant of the first principles of scriptural divinity.

Some time during this year, Mr. Benson published a work, styled "SOCINIANISM UNSCRIPTURAL, or the Prophets and Apostles vindicated from the charge of holding the doctrine of Christ's *mere Humanity*; being the second Part of a Vindication of his Divinity, inscribed to the Rev. Dr. Priestley, by the late Rev. J. Fletcher;" to which he added, "In a large detail of instances, a Demonstration of the Want of Common Sense in the New Testament Writers, on the supposition of their believing and teaching the above-mentioned doctrine: in a series of Letters to the Rev. Mr. Wesley."

No proper estimate can be formed of Mr. Fletcher's superior talents, as a writer, from the nine letters included in this volume, as he left almost every one of them in an unfinished state. But even in *this* state, they prove him to have been not only a man of learning, piety, zeal, and orthodoxy, but a man possessed of a mind formed upon no ordinary scale. These general observations must suffice upon the subject of the letters in question.

Of Mr. Benson's Letters to Mr. Wesley, every orthodox reader of sense will approve. In the perusal of them, the reader will easily discern, that, to whatever extent Dr. Priestley may have excelled in his acquaintance with Chymistry, and however respectable he may have been as a man of general reading and knowledge, in Divinity he was far removed from an adept.

The Doctor having asserted, that the sacred writers considered our Lord in no other character than a *mere* man; Mr. Benson shows, in his

first letter, how destitute of common sense St. Paul must appear, according to this opinion.

The following are a few of the absurdities with which the New Testament abounds, upon the supposition that Christ is a *mere man* :—

“In the beginning of the Epistle to the *Romans*,” says Mr. Benson, “according to this doctrine, we must understand the Apostle as follows : Chap. i. 1, ‘*Paul*, a servant of Christ,’ that is, a servant of a *mere man*, ‘called to be an Apostle, (not of *men*, as he informs the Galatians, neither by *man*, but by Jesus Christ,’ a *mere man* ! ‘and God the Father, who raised him from the dead,) separated unto the Gospel of God,—concerning his *Son Jesus Christ*, our Lord,’ a *mere man*, ‘made of the seed of *David*, according to the flesh, and declared to be the *Son of God* with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead, by whom,’ though a *mere man*, ‘we have received grace and apostleship ;—among whom are ye also, the called of Jesus Christ ;’ that is, the called of a *mere man*, once indeed on earth, but now confined to heaven, and whom, therefore, ye *Romans* never saw, nor heard, nor could have any access to, or intercourse with,—‘To all that be at *Rome*—Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father,’ the self-existent, independent, supreme, and everlasting Jehovah, ‘and from the Lord Jesus Christ,’ a *mere man*, who had no existence till about forty or fifty years ago, but who, nevertheless, is the source and fountain, the author and giver of grace and peace, conjointly with the Supreme God !”

Other absurdities equal to those now mentioned, upon the supposition of Christ’s being a *mere man*, or even a creature the most exalted, stare us in the face as we proceed through the Epistles.

The author proceeds to quote a few verses from the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the *Romans* ; adding, as he proceeds, a Socinian comment. For instance : “ ‘When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ,’ a *mere man*, says the Doctor, died for the ungodly.—‘God commended his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ,’ a *mere man* ! ‘died for us,’ viz. *one mere man* for the *whole human race* ! ‘Much more, then, being now justified by his blood,’—the blood of *one mere man* ? ‘we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled unto God,’ many millions as we are ! ‘by the death of his Son,’ viz. the death of *one mere man* ! ‘much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved (from everlasting damnation) by his life,’ the life of the same *mere man* !”

Sufficient specimens have been given to prove, that St. Paul, if he believed Christ to be no more than a *mere man*, however exalted, was equally destitute of common sense and inspiration.

The author, in the tenth letter, after observing that he had reviewed all the Epistles of the New Testament, and that he had selected most of

the texts in which the Lord Jesus is spoken of, adds, "Methinks every reasonable man must allow, that they are all *absurd*, and the greatest part of them even *profane*, upon the supposition that he is a mere man."

He then proceeds to notice several passages in St. John's Gospel and the Book of Revelation, in which Jesus Christ is mentioned in terms wholly inapplicable to any mere man, or the most dignified being in the universe.

This work we must now reluctantly dismiss. And we do not hesitate to say, that it will be found impossible for any man of sense, who professes to believe the Scriptures, to peruse it with care and attention, without either becoming a substantially orthodox Christian, or, if honest, ceasing to denominate himself a Christian.

At the close of the year, Mr. Benson, taking a view of God's providential dealings towards himself and his family, thus expresses himself: "And now another year is past! Many have been the trials of this year. During the three first months of it, I was much afflicted, but the Lord delivered me, and, in a measure, restored me. My wife, after a confinement, was long afflicted with lameness, but the Lord has restored her; and though the children have been afflicted once and again, the Lord has restored them. Many, also, have been the spiritual mercies of the year. O that I may be truly thankful, and more than ever devoted to God's glory! I see that I have great cause to be humbled for my unfaithfulness to the grace of God, as well as for my many sins. May the Lord grant me true repentance and forgiveness, and graciously make me a new creature in Christ Jesus!"

On the first day of the year 1792, Mr. Benson observes, "My soul was much drawn out in prayer in the morning, at Cherry-Street, as also at Coleshill-Street in the afternoon, and the people were much affected and comforted. In the evening, the Society met for renewing their covenant with God. Two persons appear to have received much divine consolation."

After having preached four times on the 22d of January, and read prayers, Mr. Benson says, "I fear I have rather exceeded my strength in preaching these four times to-day, and continuing so long every time." Having thus expressed himself, instead of giving way to gloomy foreboding, he adds, "I hope a night's rest will restore me again, through the blessing of God."

It does not appear that he felt any inconvenience on the day following from such excessive labour, for he preached three times in the course of it; nor does he mention, that, in doing so, he felt the least difficulty. "Both at Woodhouse and Dudley," he remarks, "we had very precious opportunities; the people being much affected, and, I trust, several of them much comforted."

It appears, that as early as March 11, of this year, Mr. Benson had it in contemplation to write Notes on the New Testament. How little did he then imagine that he should, after being sixty years of age, engage to write a large Commentary upon the whole of the Scriptures, and live to complete the arduous undertaking, and that in a manner highly creditable to his good sense, learning, and piety? The humble views he then had of what, in the way of Notes upon the New Testament, he thought he might be able to produce, will appear from the following quotation.

“The two last days I have spent chiefly in writing, having begun a large work, which God knows whether I shall live to finish or make any progress in. Should the Notes never be published, nor answer any end to others, writing them will at least increase my own knowledge of the Scriptures, and be a sweet and useful employment of my leisure hours.”

In consequence of the mysterious union which subsists betwixt the human soul and body, they mutually, though the greatest extremes in nature, affect each other. This Mr. Benson sensibly felt on the 15th of March, on which day he observes, “Having slept poorly last night, I have been exceedingly low in my mind to-day, and almost unfit for any thing. In the afternoon I rode to Wednesbury, where I preached in the evening; but it was, I fear, to little purpose. Alas! how are we compassed about with infirmity! what weak and helpless creatures we are! May the Lord sanctify to me this, and every other dispensation of his Providence!”

On the morning of March 24, Mr. Benson was in imminent danger of losing his life, when riding into Birmingham. The horse he rode having taken fright, and becoming quite unmanageable, Mr. Benson soon found himself under his feet, trodden upon, and dragged either by his keeping hold of the bridle, or by the stirrup. “How,” says he, “I got disengaged I do not know. I was so stunned by the fall as not to be able to stand when I rose; but I was very thankful to find that I had no bones broken, and that I was only a little bruised in two or three places. But both my upper and under coat were torn to pieces.” Having thus mentioned his happy escape, he says, “Surely this hath God wrought! Surely by this remarkable deliverance I am laid under fresh obligations to live to the glory of my great Deliverer!”

The value of that admirable work, Poole’s Synopsis, is now more generally known than it was when about thirty ago a copy of it came into Mr. Benson’s possession. On the 4th of April, he remarks, “I have met with a great treasure, viz. Poole’s Synopsis. Not having read much in it, I never knew its value before. The small value now set upon this most invaluable and useful work, is, I think, a striking proof of the decay of real learning in the present age.”

Mr. Benson's youngest child, after having been ill for about a week, breathed its last on the morning of the 8th of April. He says on the occasion, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord."

The personal application made by Mr. Benson to himself, of all he read and preached, is a proof that, through the Divine blessing, he was able, without any mortifying drawback, from conscience remonstrating, "Physician, heal thyself," to inculcate every precept, as well as doctrine of Christianity. No minister who does not imbibe much of the Spirit of his Divine Master, can, with comfort to himself, faithfully inculcate *every* branch of practical religion.

Having preached four times in the course of April 22, Mr. Benson, under a powerful sense of his responsibility, thus expresses himself. "O that I may be enabled to do my duty to this people, and to watch for their souls as one that must give account." He then adds, "St. Chrysostom, it seems, never read Heb. xiii. 20, 21, without trembling, conscious of the great charge entrusted with him; and yet he was a most zealous preacher, and faithful pastor. O how much more reason have I to tremble? Lord, impress more deeply upon my mind the importance of the care of souls."

Mr. Benson and Mr. Bradburn having mutually agreed to change circuits on the 17th of April, the former having been appointed by the last Conference to the Manchester, and the latter to the Birmingham Circuit, did not, in consequence of some intervening circumstances, change till the 17th of May. On that day Mr. Benson, with his family, arrived in safety at Manchester, where he met several affectionate friends who came to welcome him into the circuit.

The 1st of July was to him a day of great labour and equal encouragement. "In the morning," he says, "we had a very precious opportunity, and the word, I trust, was made a blessing to many. In the forenoon, at Salford, I preached on Matt. v. 20; and before I had concluded, one person cried out bitterly in anguish of spirit, and the congregation in general was much affected. In the evening at Oldham-Street, I preached from, 'I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God,' &c. It was indeed a very solemn time; and towards the close of the discourse a peculiar influence attended the word, and the whole congregation seemed quite melted down. There were people weeping upon all sides; and I doubt not, many were truly comforted. Unto thee, O Lord, be all the glory of thy own work!"

Violent contentions having arisen among several of the society at Liverpool, in consequence of their different sentiments on the subjects of preaching in Church hours in one of their chapels, and the introduction of the Lord's Supper into it; Mr. Benson, and five of his brethren in the ministry, set out for that town on the 3d of July, with a design, if

possible, to restore peace and harmony among the contending parties. This, through the Divine blessing upon their friendly and judicious exertions, they were enabled to effect. Mr. Benson, with his wonted piety and good sense, says, upon this subject, "Having by the Divine blessing been enabled to bring matters to this much-desired issue, we spent some time in prayer, and then broke up the meeting." A circular letter was forwarded by post to the Preachers, informing them of the reconciliation in question.

It is to be lamented when at any time contentions prevail among the followers of the Prince of Peace; but it is highly pleasing to observe, that in each of them, though its operations for a time may be suspended, is found a principle, the native tendency of which is, to promote peace, love, and unity, amongst all the members of Christ's mystical body. How opposite in its nature and tendency is this principle to that which is prevalent in those characters, who "are presumptuous and self-willed," relentless and unforgiving?

Mr. Benson, having travelled by coach from Manchester, with several of his brethren, arrived in London on the 25th of July, though the Conference did not begin till the 31st. This Conference, which was concluded about the 15th of August, Mr. Benson mentions as the most disagreeable he had ever attended. He was decidedly of opinion, that if certain of his brethren had yielded a little, some very unpleasant differences which then existed, might have been easily adjusted.

Disputes ran high on the question, Whether the Methodists should, in any given circumstances, receive the Holy Sacrament from the hands of their own Preachers! The arguments for and against their doing so, together with the numbers and respectability of the Preachers who took opposite sides, were so nearly balanced, that the Conference deemed it proper, as an extraordinary case, not of morality, but of prudence, to decide it by lot. To this mode of decision Mr. Benson objects. "I entirely disapproved," he remarks, "of putting the question respecting the expediency of our giving or not giving the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, to the lot. It did not seem to me that that was, by any means, the proper method of determining the matter. And though the lot drawn was, 'You shall not give the Sacrament this year,' yet I fear this will by no means satisfy those who wish to have the ordinance. May the Lord look upon us, and heal all our breaches!"

To those who consider every thing lawful to be expedient, and who, consequently, manifest a great defect both of general knowledge and prudence; many of the disputes upon the subject in question will appear as so many effects of weakness or ignorance, or both united. But the contending parties were neither weak nor ignorant; wise and good men were found in ranks opposed to each other.

The views of the Preachers, about the close of the Conference, upon the subject in debate, will appear from the following circular letter addressed to the members of the Methodist Societies.

"To the Members of our Societies, who desire to receive the Lord's Supper from the hands of their own Preachers.

"Very dear Brethren,

"The Conference desire us to write to you, in their name, in the most tender and affectionate manner, and to inform you of the event of their deliberations concerning the administration of the Lord's Supper.

"After debating the subject time after time, we were greatly divided in sentiment. In short, we knew not what to do, that peace and union might be preserved. At last one of the senior brethren (Mr. Pawson) proposed that we should commit the matter to God by putting the question to the lot, considering that the Oracles of God declare, 'that the lot causeth contentions to cease, and parteth between the mighty;' and again, that the lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord;' and considering also that we have the example of the Apostles themselves, in a matter, which we thought, all things considered, of less importance.

"We accordingly prepared the lots; and four of us prayed. God was surely present, yea, his glory filled the room. Almost all the Preachers were in tears, and, as they afterwards confessed, felt an undoubted assurance that God himself would decide. Mr. Adam Clarke (now Dr. Clarke) was then called on to draw the lot, which was, 'You shall not administer the Sacrament the ensuing year.' All were satisfied. All submitted. All was peace. Every countenance seemed to testify that every heart said, 'It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.' A minute was then formed according to the previous explanation of the lots, that the Sacrament should not be administered in our Connexion, for the ensuing year, except in London. The prohibition reaches the Clergy of the Church of England, as well as other brethren.

"We do assure you, dear Brethren, we should have been perfectly resigned, if the lot had fallen on the other side. Yea, we should, as far as Christian prudence and expediency would have justified, have encouraged the administration of the Lord's Supper by the Preachers; because we had not a doubt but God was uncommonly present on the occasion, and did himself decide.

"Signed, in behalf of the Conference,

"ALEXANDER MATHER, President.

"THOMAS COKE, Secretary."

When in the course of these Memoirs, we pass over weeks or even months, without taking much, or almost any notice of Mr. Benson's labours, it is not to be understood that there was any intermission in them; for in their performance he was proverbially regular and punctual.

Under date October 18, he says: "On Thursday night I met the Leaders, and informed them, that as I understood there were some individuals who were grieved at our reading the prayers at Salford Chapel, we would drop reading them, unless a majority of the Trustees of that Chapel requested us to read them; because it was a maxim with me never to contend about an indifferent thing. They seemed divided in their sentiments respecting the matter; but as a majority of them did not request a continuance of them, they drop, at least, till they do."

This is not the language of a partisan, but of a man of sense, piety, and more than ordinary grasp; who was willing to adopt any measure which he conceived to be best calculated to promote the interests of true religion. In proof of this, we find that, under date August 27, he says, "This evening I preached on the Unity of the Spirit, and was favoured with a degree of liberty in so doing. O that the professors of religion would but consider the sin and folly of contending with each other about indifferent things!"

In proof of the folly of such contention, it may with truth be urged, that many who were most clamorous to have the Lord's Supper administered in their own Chapels, after their demands had been acceded to, very seldom approached the sacred table.

On the night of November 4, Mr. Benson says, "I bless the Lord, I have been enabled to preach four times to-day, and at each time with much liberty. The people were much affected, especially in the forenoon at Salford, and at Oldham-Street in the evening. The congregations have been very large, and I am persuaded many have been profited."

After having preached to an attentive congregation at Oldham-Street on the 7th of November, Mr. Benson read the Report of the Strangers' Friend Society there; the members of which had, in the course of the preceding year, distributed upwards of £400 amongst distressed objects, the number of whom amounted to more than three thousand.

Of this Institution, which reflects honour upon the age and country in which it originated, a short account may be acceptable. It commenced, Mr. Benson says, in his Apology for the Methodists, "in London in the year 1784, under the patronage of Mr. Wesley. Some pious persons, who occasionally visited the sick, found many, not only grievously afflicted with various diseases, but entirely destitute of the very necessities of life. After some consideration, a plan was formed to raise a fund, for the relief of such miserable objects, by each person subscribing

a penny or two-pence a week. But the applications becoming daily more and more frequent, and the means of supplying the wants of the destitute and afflicted being very small, it was soon found necessary to ask help of persons of more affluent circumstances. The consequence was that the Benevolent, or Strangers' Friend Society, was formed, at the period above mentioned; to administer relief to the sick poor, that were destitute of other help, of all denominations; each member of that institution agreeing to contribute, according to his ability, in order to raise a fund for that purpose. Since that time, many societies of a similar nature have been established among the Methodists, in different parts of the kingdom, as at Bristol, Liverpool, Birmingham, Manchester, Sheffield, Leeds, Hull, and in most towns and populous villages, where they have considerable congregations, and where their friends are numerous."

Mr. Benson, who always proved himself a firm friend to every charitable institution, preached a sermon at Oldham-Street, on the evening of December 25, previous to the making a collection, in aid of the Sunday-schools, when, he says, he "was favoured with much liberty. Many of the children were present, beautifully ranged in the front of the gallery, with a great number of additional candles, placed in regular order. They sung admirably well, and the music had a pleasing effect."

That Sunday-schools are susceptible of much improvement, in a moral and religious point of view, is indisputable. Their being kept open during divine service in the forenoon, where it is practicable for the children who are taught in them to be present, under proper superintendence, at places of worship, is an abuse, which, it is to be hoped, the good sense and piety of the patrons and conductors of those schools will exert themselves to remove. We say, where it is practicable for them to attend public worship; for, in many places, they are so numerous, as to render their attendance, in general, utterly impossible. It has been hinted, that those children, while at public worship, ought to be properly superintended; and, indeed, for want of this, many of them are, by their bad behaviour, a perfect nuisance, highly offensive to all who have proper ideas of the solemnities and decencies of public worship, and, no doubt, displeasing to God, who commands "all things to be done decently and in order." Children, properly instructed, may, in a short time, be taught to conduct themselves, with respect to the forms of public worship, with as much order and propriety at a church or chapel as well-disciplined soldiers do upon the parade, under the inspection of superior officers, who resent every look and motion opposed to soldier-like behaviour. But this is far from being the case in general. Many children, in consequence of being suffered to divert themselves in churches and chapels, associate profane ideas with those places of worship and divine service. How injurious such an association as this may

be to them in future life, it is impossible to calculate. As, then, none of them ought to be suffered to disgrace any place of worship, and as many of them cannot be accommodated in either churches or chapels, during the time of divine service in the forenoon; they ought, we apprehend, in the course of that period, to be personally instructed in the principles of religion by catechisms and verbal addresses; nor ought singing and prayer to be omitted on those occasions. The truth is, much as hath been said of the efficacy of Sunday-schools, that, independent of religious instruction and discipline, taking both time and eternity into the account, their utility is problematical.

Towards the end of November, and for several days of the following month, Mr. Benson endured severe affliction. On December 9, he observes, "I have had a very distressing week. I was in the most excruciating pain during the whole of last Thursday night, and being unable to sleep as much as one minute, I rose twice, and continued up for some time, pouring out my soul in prayer to God, in great anguish of mind, as well as bodily pain. In the morning I was a little better, and found a degree of trust in the Lord and peace of mind."

From this passage we learn, that anguish of mind, arising from excruciating pain, is compatible with eminent piety. Mr. Benson, amidst all his anguish and distress, instead of murmuring, on account of the painful dispensation, in imitation of his Divine Master, "prayed the more earnestly." On being able, shortly after, to preach without pain, he expressed himself in the language of the warmest gratitude.—"O that I could be truly thankful for the Lord's loving-kindness and tender mercy; and that I may be enabled to live more to his glory!"

On the morning and evening of December 25, he preached in Oldham-Street Chapel, and in the forenoon at Salford. On each of those occasions, he was powerfully assisted; and he had the happiness to find, that the word delivered by him found its way to the hearts, as well as to the understandings of his auditors.

After holding a watch-night on the 31st of December, he, on the following day, informs us, that it was numerously attended, and that few went away till it was concluded. "I found my mind," says he, "in some measure, thankful for all the mercies of the year, and humbled under a sense of my many failings and sins. I was assisted in preaching and praying, and have reason to believe it was a very profitable time to many. O that this may be, indeed, a new year to me: a year of greater devotedness to God, and usefulness to man, than any I have ever lived!"

We find, that, on January 6, 1793, Mr. Benson went from Manchester to preach a charity sermon, in aid of the Sunday-schools at Warrington. He complains of the smallness of the collection, which he attri-

butes to the poverty of the congregation in general, together with, as he says, "their not being very liberal." At that period, few of the inhabitants of that town were disposed to hear the Gospel preached with clearness and power, either in a church, or any other place of worship.

About this time, many of the inhabitants of the manufacturing towns in England, dazzled by the deceitful glare of the French Revolution, even after the Convention had ordered their too indulgent Sovereign to die by the hand of the common executioner, manifested strong symptoms of disloyalty. At Manchester, disaffection to Government, with its usual concomitant, an attachment to democratical principles, was very prevalent. While those enemies to their King and country were lavish in their abuse of that excellent Civil Government which has long been the admiration of learned and intelligent foreigners, and that is, in fact, the best with which any nation was ever favoured; they reprobated, as a Preacher of Politics, every Minister who inculcated the plain Christian duty of subjection to "principalities and powers." While they did every thing in their power, by conversation, pamphlets, and the encouragement of disaffected periodical prints, to bring his late excellent Majesty, together with his Government, into general contempt, it appeared to them little less than treason against the "Majesty of the people," to preach a sermon, however temperately, which had for its subject the sin of rebellion, or the duty of submission to the Civil Power. While they were in the habit of using such seditious language, as no other Government but that under the protection of which they lived would tolerate; they maintained that they needed emancipation from a galling bondage. Confounding liberty with that licentiousness which is more pernicious than despotism in this land of civil and religious freedom, they groaned, as if subjected to the greatest tyranny. All who advocated the cause of Government were, in their estimation, opposed to the melioration of society, and rebels against the "Rights of Man." The most bloody deeds of the French democrats they palliated, as the necessary result of their having suddenly emerged from slavery. All the crimes of the people they charged upon their rulers; for, according to them, the decisions of the multitude, if wholly free from foreign influence, would include the perfection of political wisdom. The evidence of facts completely overthrows that unscriptural and absurd theory. How opposed Mr. Benson was to such wild and destructive notions, will appear from the following quotation:—

"February 3. A spirit of disloyalty and rebellion manifesting itself in this town, I have thought it my duty occasionally to check it, by inculcating subjection to the higher powers; and as some have termed this preaching politics, I took occasion, from Tit. iii. 1, &c. to show, that I had done no more than was my duty, and that to preach politics was a very different thing from a minister's inculcating a plain duty."

This is the language of a man who well knew how to distinguish betwixt party politics, to meddle with which is below the character of a Minister of Christ, and the duty incumbent on all in the sacred office, to maintain that Christians are bound to submit themselves to, "every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake," except in such cases in which human laws are opposed to Divine; for in these God ought to be obeyed in preference to men.

A true Christian patriot rejoices in the prosperity, and grieves on account of the adversity of his country. Such a patriot was Mr. Benson; and hence, at an early period of the French Revolution, when victory did not declare in favour of Great Britain and her Allies, he thus expresses himself. "March 11. On Saturday night I was so much distressed on account of the critical situation of the Dutch, and our troops gone to their aid, that I could not sleep. The French had taken Breda and another town, and several others were besieged; and there seemed not to be a sufficient defence against them. But the noble Prince of Orange, in his Manifesto, declares his chief dependence to be on Jehovah, the All-wise and All-powerful, who had often appeared for the protection of the Dutch nation. And it seems his dependence has not been misplaced. God has appeared for them. The French armies upon the Rhine have been beaten by the Austrians and Prussians in several engagements, and they have been obliged hastily to abandon the towns in Holland, and to withdraw their troops. I have not heard any thing for some years that has afforded me so much joy; an event so unexpected affected me to tears."

Mr. Benson's ardent zeal for God frequently led him to extraordinary exertions. This appears to have been the case on the 7th of April, when he observes, "This day I have gone quite beyond my strength; having preached, not only four times, but very long every time. However, I hope good has been done. The congregations have been large, attentive, and affected."

Mr. Benson's "Defence of the Methodists," in five letters to Dr. Tatham, containing Remarks on a Sermon delivered by that Clergyman, at four Churches in Oxford, was published about this time. It is an able performance, though too severe in a few places. So popular was it on its appearance, that in about the course of a year a third edition of it was demanded.

Dr. Tatham having maintained that a considerable share of, what is generally called learning, is necessary to qualify any man for the work of the Ministry; that the right of private judgment, which is allowed by all consistent Protestants, relates chiefly, if not wholly, to the choice of Teachers; and that the great and general duty of Christians at large, is to judge whether Ministers possess "ability of head and integrity of heart;" Mr. Benson replies:—

"I have no doubt, Sir, but it is the duty of Christians in their choice of Teachers to consider well, who they have reason to think are best qualified to instruct them; but that this deserves to be termed their *great and general* duty, I much question. It is certainly a much *greater and more general*, as it is a prior duty, to judge of the *truth or falsehood, importance or non-importance* of the doctrines taught by the different Teachers, between whom our choice may be suspended; and it is chiefly by *this test* that we are to *try the spirits whether they be of God*. What avails it to me, Rev. Sir, what a man's *abilities* may be as a Teacher, or what his *integrity*, if, on the one hand, he be *deceived* himself, and of course *deceive* me, by teaching what is false; or, on the other, merely amuse me by teaching what is *unimportant*."

From these observations, it is apparent, that though a man must possess "ability of head and integrity of heart," in order to his being qualified for the work of the ministry, yet other requisites, for that purpose, are *essentially* necessary.

Mr. Benson, who was in point of learning, as well as natural abilities, far superior to many Doctors in Divinity, says, at page 7 of his Defence, "As to any danger of deception from reading the Scriptures in a *translation*, rather than in the *original*, that can but be very small, especially in such an incomparable translation as ours. But 'the subjects treated on in Scripture are mysterious, and those holy books of great antiquity, and of consequence the style frequently as mysterious as the subject of which it treats.' I answer, as to all points of doctrine and practice, that are essential to salvation, the Scriptures are sufficiently intelligible to the meanest capacity, as being manifestly written for the *common people*. And it has been, and is the judgment of many great critics, that they are more *intelligible* to such than to men of great learning; and that the sense in which a *common man*, of *ordinary capacity*, would understand any passage of Scripture, is *generally*, if not always, the true sense of it."

Whatever Mr. Benson says, on the subject of learning, in opposition to Dr. Tatham, whose arguments and compositions are far from being models for imitation, is not to be looked upon as expressive of the slightest wish to depreciate an acquisition so valuable. Learning he highly valued, because he knew its worth; but, at the same time, he knew that it was no more than a secondary qualification for the work of the ministry. He knew, also, that it was possible to take Degrees without what deserves the name of learning; and that many who have had a University education, of the advantages of which they never availed themselves, have not been men of general reading or knowledge.

But let us hear Mr. Benson himself upon this subject. "Above twenty years ago I entered at Oxford, in hopes of perfecting my education in the Languages and Sciences. And as this was soon after the *Doctors*

and *Masters* in full convocation, a general search having been made, had expelled from the University,—all that were judged deficient in capacity and learning; had I not reason to believe I was become a member of a very learned body? But how great were my astonishment and mortification, when waiting upon my Tutor, Mr. B——, to know in what books he would give me Lectures, I was given to understand that the Gentlemen under his care, read, (some of whom were in Orders,) *Cornelius Nepos* and the *Greek Testament*, and that I must go through these books with them. After attending a few times at the hours appointed, unable any longer to brook so much loss of time, I made bold to intimate that these books, and most of the *Latin* and *Greek* Classics, were very familiar to me, as I had taught them all at a Grammar School, near Bristol. He then informed me, that he would excuse my attending, but as none of the other Gentlemen under his care were capable of reading any other books, he could not conveniently give me Lectures in any other books. I was, therefore, obliged, though at the University, to be, what you call ‘self-taught,’ for I did not receive the smallest assistance from any, save that I attended public Lectures on Divinity, read by the *Regius Professor* at Christ-Church, and went through a course of Lectures on Experimental Philosophy.”

Dr. Knox, in one of his Essays, gives an account nothing more favourable of the learning of many students at College. But we neither mention this, nor quote Mr. Benson, to insinuate that a College education is not of very great importance, but purely to show, that a man’s having been at one or other of our deservedly famed Universities, does not imply that he is a man of learning. It is pleasing to add, that since Dr. Knox wrote his Essays, and Mr. Benson his Defence, a very great change for the better, both in point of learning and religion, has taken place in both Oxford and Cambridge.

Mr. Benson having animadverted, in his wonted able manner, but with a degree of severity, which, when between sixty and seventy he did not fully approve, upon such parts of Dr. Tatham’s Sermon as he deemed objectionable, in the concluding paragraph of the work he says to his opponent: “Amidst all the mistakes which you have made in your Sermon, and which I believe have proceeded from your ignorance of the people you take upon you to censure, (Methodists and Dissenters,) I am happy to declare my entire coincidence with you in doctrine when you teach that ‘the conduct which will secure our happiness both in this world and the next, is prescribed in one short command of Holy Scripture,—*Fear God, and honour the King*, by which religion and loyalty are coupled together.’ And, whatever you may suppose, this is what the Methodists, in particular, uniformly and constantly inculcate, and for the practice of which they are notorious.”

This able and opportune pamphlet contributed much, no doubt, towards giving the public a correct view of Methodism.

After preaching at Redhall and Ashton on May 20, Mr. Benson rode home to Manchester. "I was," says he, "much affected to find the whole road crowded with drunken and idle people, who had been at the races. Notwithstanding the bloody war in which we are engaged, and the general stagnation of trade, the people in general are unaffected, and as fond of their pleasures as if all was prosperity, peace and plenty."

Affectionately mindful of his old friends, Mr. Benson visited many of them from the 21st to the 24th of May. "In the forenoon of the 21st," he remarks, "I rode to Mosley, and preached at two, in the pretty chapel which our friends have erected there since I was labouring in this country twelve years ago. We had a large congregation and a refreshing time, the people in general being much affected. I then rode to Delph, where I had the happiness to see the chapel quite crowded. I was glad to find that the seed I had been enabled to sow here twelve years ago had taken root, and produced such a harvest."

On the morning of May 22, he preached at Oldham to a deeply attentive congregation. "The Lord," says he, "was present with us, and many were much refreshed." At two in the afternoon he discoursed at Rochdale from Col. i. 27, 28, to a numerous congregation. From Rochdale he proceeded to Todmorden, where he addressed, at seven in the evening, a large and attentive audience. On the following morning, he preached again at Todmorden, "when," he says, "the Lord refreshed me with his presence." Having visited his friends at Millend, where he preached with blessed effect, as he also did at Rochdale, in the evening, he returned to Manchester on the 24th of May.

At Oldham-Street Chapel on the evening of June 1, and the morning of the following day, he was much assisted and comforted. At Altringham, where he preached and met the classes in the course of the day, he says, "I was grieved to see the people so slack, and the work decaying."

When a declension of the work of God is discovered in some places, it is but too common with some ill-informed professors, to attribute it to their ministers, however faithfully they may labour in the word and doctrine. Part of the cross which those Stewards of the mysteries of God are called to endure, consists in this, that no faithfulness of theirs in preaching, nor diligence in watching over the people committed to their care, nor exemplariness of conduct, nor all these together, can preserve them from the censure of some, who make a part of their charge. Such censorious professors as, instead of esteeming their pastors highly in love, censure them, as if the times and the seasons were in their power, however highly they may think of themselves, are a principal cause of the declension of true religion in many places.

But still the great mass of Christian professors must not be confounded with such self-created censors, as are the bane of every church or religious society of which they are members. Nor must it be forgotten, that, whatever ministers of Christ may suffer from those who are impatient of control, their office is both holy and honourable. Of this Mr. Benson was fully sensible; and hence, on the 4th of June, he says, "I found much thankfulness to God, to see the Chapel so full, and the people so attentive, and to think that he had graciously called me to so noble, holy, and useful an office as that of preaching the Gospel. Bless the Lord, O my soul."

Many of the poor being out of employment at Manchester and Salford, Mr. Benson preached a sermon from Mich. vi. 8, in which he stated, in forcible terms, their distressing circumstances; after which a collection was made for their relief. "I was favoured," he observes, "with freedom in speaking; and while I was recommending mercy towards those in distress, many tears were shed."

On the 26th of July, when at Todmorden, he says, "The four last days I have chiefly spent in preparing for Conference. This forenoon I set out in company with Mr. Barber, and came hither, where I preached with much liberty, to a large congregation." At noon he preached at Heptonstall, and in the evening at Halifax. Many of his old friends there, who had sense and grace to set a due estimate upon his worth, earnestly pressed him to come and labour once more amongst them. "I hope," says he, "the Lord will send me where he sees I shall be useful."

He was much grieved, on the 6th of August, on account of the sudden death of his very dear and pious friend, Mr. Fox, of Hull. "I had seen him," says he, "in Leeds, several times in the course of the Conference, and was glad to find him, as usual, a most benevolent, friendly, and affectionate man. He and Mrs. Fox set off in a one-horse chaise, last night, for Thorp Arch. On B—— Moor, the chaise was overturned, and Mrs. Fox was a little hurt on her face. Mr. Fox did not appear hurt at all; but, notwithstanding, having wiped the blood from off his wife's face, and endeavoured to lift up the chaise, he fell down, and instantly expired."

August 26, Mr. Benson says, "To-day the answer of the Rev. W. Russel, Curate of Pershore, to my 'Defence,' was sent me. I have read it, and am happy to find he has not overthrown or weakened any one of my arguments. I have, however, concluded to make a few remarks upon it." Several of Mr. Benson's friends were astonished that he took any notice of so contemptible a performance as *Russel's Hints*. Of this Mr. Benson was aware; and hence, in an advertisement, he observes, "I think proper to observe here, that, although his remarks may

not deserve *notice*, yet the truths contained in the following pages deserve to be known."

This is strictly true; but though Mr. *Russel's Hints* are, in general, foolish, and, in many places, contradictory, as well as incorrectly written, yet they afforded Mr. Benson an opportunity of furnishing the public with a farther defence of the Methodists. Mr. Russel's puny attack upon that religious body did not demand the talents of Mr. Benson, in order to be repelled; talents far inferior would have been fully adequate to that purpose.

As a specimen of the ease and good humour with which Mr. Benson addressed the Curate of Pershore, we insert the following paragraph:—

"It certainly, Sir, was a most true and ingenuous confession, with which you begun this second letter, viz. 'that your head was not clear, and that you were not capable of reasoning with cogency.' I am amazed, Sir, if you judged it to be your duty to refute what you call my '*trash and falsehood*,' 'that you should suppose it would be an offence to the Deity to pray to him for supernatural illumination and a spirit of discernment,' since it is manifest, that contrary to the high opinion you have of yourself, 'your natural faculties are not sufficient for the purpose.' If you ever should take up the pen again, especially on any controversial subject, I would advise you not to be afraid or ashamed to pray for supernatural illumination and a spirit of discernment; for, I am sure, you need a greater degree of these than you possess. And I advise you to spend a little more time than you seem to have done, in the cultivation of your parts. You ought at least, Sir, to understand *Grammar*, or not pretend to become an author. If a person that speaks extempore should sometimes 'give Priscian reason to complain of a broken head,' (as you think some of the Methodist Preachers do,) it is a pardonable fault; but for a Clergyman of the Established Church to sit down in his study, and compose a book for public inspection, and make such massacre of his native language as you do, is, indeed, inexcusable. There is scarce a concord or rule of government, in the English language, that you have not broken. *Participles, adverbs, and adjectives*, you knock down in ranks, and sin against the whole group of *moods and tenses*. Certainly, Sir, till, by some future publication, you give us proof that you have cultivated and improved your understanding more than you yet appear to have done, you must not pretend to be any judge in literature." In 1794, a second edition of this pamphlet was published.

After preaching at Birstal and Rochdale, on his way to Manchester, Mr. Benson arrived there on the 10th of September.

The too common practice of individuals amongst the Methodists remonstrating against Preachers, appointed by Conference to labour

amongst them, has often proved highly injurious to the interests of vital godliness. A Preacher remonstrated against, whatever may be his piety and talents, needs more courage than generally falls to the lot of the best of men, to go comfortably to a circuit where he has reason to believe that his sermons will be listened to with prejudice, and himself looked upon as an intruder. Some have been remonstrated against purely because they were not known to their opponents; and others, not on the ground of their being suspected destitute of either piety, zeal, or talents, but that they have not suited the taste of three or four individuals, not always eminent for sense, taste, or piety. The pretty general practice of petitioning for, and remonstrating against Preachers, is a dangerous innovation in Methodism. Persons disposed to amuse themselves at the expense of those petitioners and remonstrants, have their risibility often excited, by comparing the relative worth, in point of talent, (for it is presumed, that all the Preachers are men of piety,) of the men who have been remonstrated against, and those whom the remonstrants have been obliged to receive. These observations naturally arose from the contents of the following paragraph:—

“September 11. Being informed by sundry persons, that our friends at Stockport were exceedingly grieved, at the appointment of Preachers, made by the Conference, for their circuit, and that they absolutely refused to receive Mr. ———, I rode there, and preached at noon and night, spending most of the intermediate time in reasoning with our principal friends, and endeavouring to persuade them, that they were mistaken in the man, and that he would probably be both very acceptable and very useful; and I had the satisfaction of seeing most of them much influenced by what I said, and inclined to retract their rash resolution, and to receive quietly the Preachers sent to labour amongst them.”

Mr. Benson's labour of peace and love at Stockport, did not prove in vain. On the 13th of September, he observes, “Mr. Mayer and Mr. Lavender, junior, called upon me to-day, and informed me, that they had held a Leaders' meeting last night, and that they were come to the resolution to receive Mr. ———, as I advised them to do. I now see the hand of God in directing me to go to Stockport, as I do not think that any other person would have had such influence with the Stockport people as God gave me.” Yes; God gave Mr. Benson great influence, and he used it for the purpose of promoting peace and good-will amongst men in general, and the truly pious amongst them in particular. He knew well, that the wisdom from above “is pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, and full of mercy.”

The 15th of October was to Mr. Benson a glorious day. “In the morning,” says he, “at Oldham-Street, and in the forenoon at Salford, we had refreshing seasons indeed. At the latter place, I was much assisted in preaching, and my heart was very much drawn out in prayer

for the people, particularly after the sermon; and while I was pleading with the Lord that he would give me all that were in the chapel, as he had given St. Paul all that were in the ship, the whole congregation, almost without exception, was exceedingly affected. Tears were shed in abundance on all sides; and I trust, there were few, if any, present, who did not determine to be devoted to God. In the evening, I preached again at Oldham-Street, and warned a very large congregation, after the example of Noah, (Heb. xi. 7,) to prepare for the saving of their souls."

The following brief account, which Mr. Benson gives, of a member of the Methodist Society at Manchester, merits a place in this work. "In the afternoon of November 12, I attended the funeral of Mr. John Morris, who, for upwards of forty years, was a member of the Society in this town; a man of great uprightness and integrity in all his dealings with mankind, very zealous in the service of God, and a pattern of good works. He bore a long and severe affliction with amazing patience and resignation, and died in great peace of mind, and possessed of strong confidence in God, and a hope full of immortality. He was so respected by the poor and the labouring part of the community, that they crowded the church-yard to see him buried." The esteem and love manifested to Mr. Morris by the poor who knew him, refute the charge sometimes urged against the indigent, viz. that they are never grateful to their benefactors, and prove, that every truly benevolent man of property generally obtains the character of being charitable.

At the request of the principal members of the Methodist Society at Stockport, Mr. Benson preached there on December 1, for the benefit of the Sunday-schools. In the afternoon, he explained and enforced Tit. iii. 8, to a very large congregation. In the evening, the chapel was prodigiously crowded. "The children and singers," he says, "sung remarkably well, and I was much assisted in preaching. The collection amounted to a much greater sum than last year, when trade was in such a flourishing state. May the Lord have all the glory!"

Few men ever needed more energy of mind and strength of grace than Mr. Benson did, in order to be preserved from pride, on account of his extraordinary popularity. But both of these he possessed in an eminent degree; and hence, when listening multitudes heard him with profound reverence, deep attention, pleasure, and profit, he was sunk into the depths of humility. Whilst admired by others, he was often scarcely tolerable to himself.

It is a striking trait in the character of the truly pious, that they never rejoice, but grieve on account of the misconduct of those who dishonour their Christian profession. Let a man famed for piety, unhappily be guilty of a gross act of sin, and his wicked acquaintance will triumph, as if they had taken great spoil, and censure, on his account, the whole

religious body to which he belongs. With diabolical malignity, they reproach those who cleave to the Lord, because one of their companions has wandered out of the way of understanding. In this case, their conduct is equally wicked and absurd; for who, not destitute of moral feeling, would find matter for joy in the sin and consequent misery of a fellow-creature, or, not judging contrary to every rule of just decision, would condemn any corporate body, whether civil or religious, on account of the misconduct of a few of its members!

At Altringham, near Manchester, a Class-leader, some time before the 15th of December, had been guilty of a gross act of immorality. This lamentable event, in which none but the wicked would rejoice, it was feared would place an insuperable barrier against the progress of the work of God where it took place; but this fear was without foundation; for, though in every age of the church, there has been a "woe to the world, because of offences," yet God has carried on his own work; and he will continue to do so until the Jews be brought into his fold with the fulness of the Gentiles.

But let us hear Mr. Benson upon the subject of the lamentable case in question. "I bless the Lord, we were favoured with his presence, and notwithstanding the dreadful fall of one of the Leaders, I trust the work will now revive. The members of his class seemed in general much affected with his fall, and filled with compassion for him."

On December 25, we find that Mr. Benson discoursed at Salford in the forenoon, and afterwards went to the Old Church, where he partook of the Lord's Supper. In the evening he preached from that encouraging passage, 1 Tim. i. 15.

On the last day of this year, he preached, and held, as usual, a watch-night, at which he informs us, the people had both a solemn and profitable time; and on the evening of the next day, after delivering a discourse from Gen. xxviii. 20, he held a meeting at which, with many others, he renewed his covenant with God. "I endeavoured," says he, "to devote myself afresh to God, and I trust I shall be enabled to live more to his glory."

Sensible that family religion continued to be too much neglected amongst the Methodists, but more especially that part of it which consists in the religious instruction and discipline of their children, Mr. Benson, on the 6th of January, 1794, preached from Gen. xviii. 19, and observes, "I trust many will be stirred up to pay more attention than ever to their children and servants."

About this time, Mrs. Benson laboured for several days under a dangerous complaint; but after she had nearly given up all hope of life, her disorder took so favourable a turn, that she speedily recovered. Mr. Benson's relation of her extreme danger, his exercise of mind upon the

occasion, and how he was enabled to plead with God in her behalf, merits insertion.

“Manchester, January 12. Although my wife was very poorly in the morning, and rather unwilling I should leave her, yet, as I was expected to preach at Altringham, and no person was at hand to go in my place, I endeavoured to commend her to God, and went. Upon my return I found she had been worse, and had been obliged to send for the doctor again.

“13. Last night she was so extremely ill all night long, that I slept none. O that the Lord would appear for us, and grant us the expected deliverance! My trust is in him!

“17. After passing a most distressing night, she said to me, about four o'clock in the morning, ‘I think, my dear, there is now no way but one; I must die, and leave you and the sweet children.’ I answered, ‘My dear, let us trust in God. None ever trusted in him and were confounded. He never failed us yet. He never denied us in any thing in which we particularly and earnestly asked his help. And, I believe, he will now hear us, and spare your life.’ I rose with a full heart, and retired into another room. I considered with myself, Am not I a worshipper of the true God, the God of Israel, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? And may I not expect help from him in this time of need? Did not the very heathen expect help from their false gods, and may not I look for it from the true God? Am not I a Christian? a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ? and did not he do cures in the days of his flesh, and has he not given us repeated promises that he still will, if we apply to him; that he will hear and answer prayer? I then read, in the 8th of Matthew, the story of Christ’s healing the Centurion’s servant. Afterwards I turned to Heb. xiii., and read, ‘Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever!’ He knows, I thought with myself, that my wife is sick. He can heal her as easily as he healed the Centurion’s servant. But have I reason to think he will? What encouragement has he given me to expect it? or even to desire such a thing? I then turned to the Epistle of James, and read, ‘Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up.’ I was enabled to lay hold on this passage by faith. I kneeled down and spread it before the Lord in full assurance that the Lord would make it good, and I thought, as soon as it was day, I would send for two or three pious friends, and we would pray together over my afflicted wife. In the mean time, my faith was still more strengthened by reading and considering sundry other passages; as Matt. xxi. 22; ‘Whatsoever things ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive:’ and John xiv. 13, 14; ‘Whatsoever ye shall ask in

my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name I will do it.' I then read Psal. xxxiv., which was unspeakably sweet to my soul, especially the following passages: 'I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked unto him and were lightened; and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. They cry, and the Lord heareth them, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.' I now found a strong confidence that the Lord would deliver my wife, and was led to desire that he would do it this day. This I earnestly and repeatedly asked of him, with some expectation that my request would be granted. I then rose from my knees, and sat down musing upon the passages of Scripture above mentioned. After taking a little breakfast I went into her room. Immediately, upon my entering, she said, 'My dear, be not discouraged; I believe I shall be delivered soon.' I replied, 'I believe you will, for my soul has been wonderfully refreshed in praying for you.' In a few minutes she was safely delivered, and divers circumstances with regard to the help she unexpectedly had, manifested still more the Providence of God over us for good. O that we may henceforth live to his glory!"

Though Mr. Benson, from the fullest conviction of its truth, embraced the doctrine of General Redemption, yet he perused with pleasure and profit, time after time, the best works published by Calvinistic Divines. On the 14th of February, he says, "I have been much profited in reading Dr. Owen, abridged by Williams, on Heb. xii. 25—29. O that, being through grace accepted in the Beloved myself, I may serve God acceptably in every branch of worship and duty, with reverence and godly fear!"

To Mr. Benson, whose mind was so much occupied with clearly revealed truth, the clashing sentiments of such as embraced all the Articles of the Christian Faith, appeared of comparatively little moment. On the broad ground of Christianity, independent of party names and opinions, he cheerfully met all the lovers of the Lord Jesus.

March 24, he preached at Stockport, with much enlargement of heart; and a very gracious and powerful influence accompanied his discourse to the hearts of his hearers in general. "But," he observes, "my mind was much grieved at the noise and disorderly behaviour of some well-meaning persons during the love-feast; who, with their loud *amens*, *knockings*, &c. greatly disturbed the congregation, and prevented all serious and rational attention to the things spoken."

Upon the subject of such noisy meetings as have been held both amongst the Methodists and Christians of other denominations, in the course of extraordinary revivals of religion, persons of sense and piety do, and will think differently. To some, an audible *Amen*, though sanctioned by Apostolic authority, is offensive; and others condemn such responses as devout and intelligent churchmen are in the habit of making in the course of our Church service. Those men, in their opposition to noise, would have the stillness of death to reign in a church or chapel, even whilst a Minister, animated by the true spirit of devotion, thus addresses God:—"We praise thee, we bless thee, we worship thee, we glorify thee, we give thanks to thee for thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty." But while we are fully persuaded that opposition to every outward sign of devotion can never be vindicated, consistently with any principle rational or divine; we are as far from being advocates for such noise and irregularity as Mr. Benson witnessed; and which he justly censures. Upon some extraordinary occasions, many have been so deeply affected under the word, as to find it impossible to prevent themselves from weeping aloud. Noise thus produced few men of piety would be disposed to condemn; but the mechanical noise, which some individuals, who possess (it may be) much of the sterling gold of real devotion mixed with a base alloy of enthusiasm, are in the habit of making, is justly censured by every well-informed Christian. The forms of an extraordinary revival of religion kept up in any place, after God works no more in an extraordinary manner, cannot fail to be highly offensive to Him, and injurious to the interests of scriptural piety. They are a sort of spiritual forgeries, which tend to bring genuine revivals of religion into contempt.

Meantime, it may be reasonably asked, Who, in all cases, can exactly draw the line which separates warm, and at the same time, scriptural devotion, from enthusiasm? The truth is, that much is censured by Christians, who are of an inferior growth in religion, as enthusiasm, which is no other than an effect of eminent devotedness to God. A holy person, though strongly tinctured with enthusiasm, will be finally saved; but without holiness, no man, however orthodox in principle, regular in deportment, and opposed to enthusiasm, can possibly gain admission into heaven.

Mr. Thomas Taylor, who for more than half a century was an Itinerant Preacher amongst the Methodists, preached at Manchester on the 31st of March. "Afterwards," says Mr. Benson, "we had a love-feast for the Society. It was an instructive and profitable meeting to many. We had little or no wildness or disorder, and yet much of the divine presence. Many spoke their experience to the comfort and edification of others."—The phrase, "and yet much of the divine presence," is used in opposition to a few pious individuals, who imagined that meet-

ings, in order to be eminently profitable, must be more or less distinguished by noise and disorder.

The dying testimonies borne by many, of the efficacy of religion in raising them superior to the fear of death, may, with the utmost reason, be urged in proof of the truth and certainty of Christianity. When we consider the composure of mind, accompanied by divine joy, with which genuine Christians in general leave the world; and turn our attention to the sullen grief and keen anguish, arising from remorse of conscience, manifested by dying unconverted sinners; we are ready, with Young, to say, when speaking of true religion,

“If false,

No truth on earth so precious as the lie.”

This, as every intelligent reader knows, he said hypothetically; for of the truth of Christianity he was fully persuaded, and hence, in another part of his Night Thoughts, which has been aptly termed “a wilderness of thought,” he says of religion,

“This life it gives us, and ensures the next.”

The truth of this sentiment Mr. Benson had an opportunity of seeing exemplified on the 3d of April, when he remarks, “I called upon William Heywood, who seems dying of a consumption. He told me that he had not had a doubt of his acceptance with God, since I saw him about three months ago; and that he enjoyed continual peace and much consolation. He added, that as the world had no charms in his eyes, he desired, if it pleased God, to depart and be with Christ.”

Mr. Benson had an opportunity, on the 4th of April, of visiting a man who, in the midst of pain, was suffering joyfully. “This afternoon,” says he, “Mr. Berwick and I called upon Thomas Case in the Infirmary, who, by a large stone reared upon one end falling upon him, had one of his legs dreadfully broken, and the other bruised and mangled. We found him in great pain, and yet joyfully praising God for the afflictive dispensation, being persuaded that it will work for his good. While I was praying with him, and expressing a confidence in the divine power, as being able to heal him immediately, he was filled with consolation, and broke out aloud in the strong language of praise. Amongst several expressions of love and gratitude to God, uttered by him, was the verse of that admirable hymn, which begins with this line,

“I'll praise my Maker while I've breath.”

Finding his pain suddenly removed, he cried out, ‘Is not my leg healed?’ It was not healed, but the pain was so abated, and it was so much better,

that he was able to suffer its being set the next day. Blessed be God, it was a precious opportunity."

About the 13th of April, Mr. Benson was much grieved on hearing that a few of the senior Preachers had secretly met at Litchfield, with an intention to agree upon some plan, which, if adopted and acted upon, would lead to a separation of the Methodists from the Church of England. To every measure tending to produce such an effect, he proved himself decidedly hostile; and it cannot be doubted, that to his able and indefatigable exertions, in conjunction with those of a few other senior Preachers, the Methodists, under God, are indebted for their continuance on such friendly terms with the Church. It is highly desirable, on many accounts, that in this country, which abounds with religious sects, there should be an orthodox and zealous body of Christians, occupying a ground betwixt Churchmen on the one hand, and Dissenters on the other; and such a body are the Methodists.

Referring to the above-mentioned meeting, Mr. Benson says, under date April 13, "I found this affair likely to distract and burden my mind in the morning: however, blessed be God, I was enabled to leave it to him; and he favoured me with great liberty in preaching, both in the fore and afternoon."

"At Middleton, on the morning of April 20, we had," says Mr. Benson, "a most refreshing season, while I proved and applied the doctrine of Christ's resurrection. My own mind was much affected, and so were the minds of the people. Tears were shed in abundance, and many were filled with strong consolation." From Middleton he rode to Rochdale, where he preached at one and at five. The congregations were large and attentive. "The Lord," says he, "was with us at noon, while I explained Isa. lxiii. 1; and in the evening, 'Lovest thou me.'"

Having been long under an engagement to visit the Colne Circuit, Mr. Benson proceeded towards it on the 21st of April. At noon he discoursed at Mile-end, and in the evening at Bacup, where he had a large congregation. After preaching again at Bacup on the morning of the following day, he spent an hour agreeably and profitably in conversation with the Rev. Mr. Atkinson, of Todmorden, and Ogden, of Bacup, two Clergymen, both of whom had heard him preach. At one o'clock he addressed an attentive audience at Padiham with comfort, and at Burnley in the evening another, and afterwards went to the house of his friend Mr. Sagar, who for many years previous to his death was a very respectable member of the Methodist Society in the Colne Circuit.

On the evening of April 23, he preached at Colne to a crowded congregation, and "was much assisted in applying Rev. xx. 12; and the people heard with deep attention." After preaching again, on the morning of April 24, to many hearers who came from all directions, he

proceeded to Heptonstall. There, as in other places, he was enabled to find his way to the hearts of those whom he addressed. On the following day, he preached once more at Todmorden. Having finished his little tour, in the course of which his labours were made a great blessing to many, he rode into Manchester on the morning of April 25, where he had the happiness of meeting his family in the enjoyment of health, that crown of temporal blessings.

Always disposed to turn to spiritual advantage, every occurrence which had a tendency to arrest the people's attention, he preached at Oldham-Street Chapel, on the evening of May 7, a funeral sermon on account of the death of Mr. Thomas Barlow. His text was Lam. iii. 27, "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth." The congregation was exceedingly large, and he was enabled to preach with much liberty and power. Of Mr. Barlow he briefly says, "He made a glorious end indeed." Many young persons who attended upon the occasion, on hearing of the advantages consequent upon early piety, seemed determined without delay to devote themselves to Him, "whose service is perfect freedom."

At the earnest request of Miss Loxdale, Mr. Benson set off about the 23d of May to open a chapel at Bilstone. He spent the afternoon of the next day with Mr. Loxdale, at Bradley-Lodge. "I had," says he, "some more conversation with Miss Loxdale, who appears to be a lady of an undaunted, as well as of a most sweet spirit, and remarkably wise and prudent. But her principal qualification seems to be her piety; her love to God, with which her heart seems to be filled."—This excellent lady, who had for many years adorned her Christian profession, after having been for a short time married to Dr. Coke, so justly famed for Christian zeal and missionary exertions, died at York, a happy witness of the renewing and comforting influences of the Holy Spirit.

At ten in the morning of the 25th of May, Mr. Benson opened the new chapel, by preaching from Prov. xi. 30; "He that winneth souls is wise." "The congregation," he observes, "was much larger than the place would contain, and much affected. I preached again in the afternoon at two o'clock, when still more were present, and when we had a very precious opportunity."

Disputes at Wednesbury, for and against the introduction of the Lord's Supper into the Society there, ran high about the 26th of May; on account of which, several of its most pious and peaceable members were exceedingly grieved. There and at Dudley, at both of which places Mr. Benson preached, he says, "I endeavoured to call the attention of the hearers to something more important than what is at present a bone of contention amongst them; insisting, at Wednesbury, on faith working by love, and at Dudley, on a new creature."

At Birmingham, on May 27, he discoursed upon, "That there might be no schism in the body." On the 28th, he says, "I spent an agreeable hour with Dr. Williams. He seems a very sensible and pious man, and well acquainted with every branch of divinity."

After taking leave of his very affectionate friends at Birmingham, on the 29th of May, he arrived in safety at Manchester the next morning, where the good state of health in which he found his family excited his gratitude.

While numbers, in the neighbourhood of Manchester, were about the 14th of May, wasting their time and money on the race-ground, Mr. Benson so ordered matters, that the people might have more opportunities than they ordinarily had for waiting upon God in public. "It being," says he, "the race-week in this town, we have had preaching or public meetings, in the chapels and in other places, once or twice a day; and blessed be God, not in vain. I have heard of upwards of twenty that profess, in the course of the week, to have found peace with God; several of whom I have found in meeting the classes."

Having nearly finished the meeting of the classes, both at Manchester and the country parts of the circuit, Mr. Benson says, "I am happy to find that the classes are, in general, very lively, and that the Society is increased not less than two hundred this year."

Under date July 8, Mr. Benson gives a pleasing account of a meeting held by the Trustees of the Oldham-Street and Salford Chapels. "This evening, the Trustees of both the chapels met to consider of an answer to a Letter from the London and Bristol Trustees.* A spirit of forbearance, peace, and love, prevailed among them. They were unanimous,—1. In opposing the ordination of the Preachers; 2. In desiring the continuance of the itinerant plan; and 3. In recommending some plan to prevent the abuse of power, now in the hands of the Assistant Preachers, respecting the admission and exclusion of members of Society; and the election and discontinuance of Stewards and Leaders. Many of the Salford Trustees wish the Lord's Supper to be administered in their chapel by the Preachers, if they can have it in peace; but rather than disturb the peace of the Society, they are willing to be without it."

These Trustees manifested a spirit of unity, peace, and concord; and had all their brethren in trust been similarly disposed, Methodism would have escaped those storms and tempests by which, to the injury of many souls, it was agitated at this period of its history.

Mr. Benson in whose heart as well as understanding, the word of the Lord dwelt richly, not only embraced every opportunity which offered

* The subject of that Letter was the administration of the Lord's Supper by Methodist Preachers.

to proclaim it from the pulpit, but frequently, when some of his brethren supplied his place, rather than be silent on the Lord's-day, *sought* for labour in either his own or some other circuit. On the 20th of July, several of the Preachers being at Manchester, he says, "I was unwilling to spend the Lord's day in idleness, and, therefore, went over to Stockport. I preached at half past one, and at five; and afterwards returned."

The Conference which was held at Bristol this year, was opened on Monday, the 28th of July. On the 23d, we find that Mr. Benson was in that city. That day he spent comfortably in reading, writing, and visiting his friends. The principal part of the next day he passed in retirement. "The time," says he, "thus spent, is, to me, spent most pleasantly, as well as, I believe, most profitably." He then adds, "I have been applied to by the Trustees of the chapels here, to spend the next year in this city; and having sought direction of God, and committed the matter to him, I have consented, if the brethren in Conference think it best to appoint me. I trust the Lord will dispose of me as shall be most for his glory, and the edification of his people."

The confidence thus expressed by Mr. Benson was, no doubt, well founded; for, though his appointment for Bristol, that year, was followed by several occurrences of a painful nature to him, we cannot doubt, that God whose government is infinitely wise and good, and who, however secondary causes operate, fixes the bounds of his people's habitations, ordered it for purposes worthy of his Providence.

Under date August 3, Mr. Benson says of the Conference, "We have been fully employed last week, beginning business regularly at six in the morning, immediately after preaching, and continuing, with only the intermission of one hour, till past twelve; beginning at two, and continuing till five or some time after." He then proceeds to give some account of the work of God at Bristol, and in the Connexion.—"The congregations have been remarkably large, and many profess to have found peace with God since the beginning of the Conference. We have had blessed accounts of an enlargement of the work of God from many parts, especially from Yorkshire; and it appears, that in the course of the past year, almost ten thousand have been added to the Societies."

On one evening, in the course of the Conference Mr. Benson preached upon schism, from 1 Cor. xii. 25. He observes, "I found much liberty in speaking, and was enabled to lay before a very large and crowded congregation, the evil nature and destructive effects of a division in the body of Christ. Some were very much affected, and I hope good was done."

Such was his hope at that time, for he had much of that love which hopeth all things; but he found the next day, that his judgment of charity, which, as is always the case in such a judgment, was formed

without evidence, had not truth for its basis. But he himself shall speak upon the subject.—“But, alas! next day I found both parties were mutually opposed to each other, and that those whom the reproof and exhortation most suited, were least disposed to take them. However, I doubt not, the discourse was, and will be made a blessing to some; at least, I have the consolation of being conscious that I have done my duty, in warning the people of a great evil, which seems coming upon them.”

Mr. Benson, who was a man possessed of a more than common portion of spiritual discernment, saw the seeds of strife and division, at that time, vegetating rapidly at Bristol; and hence, towards the close of the Conference, he laboured in vain to be removed from his appointment for that city. “Seeing,” says he, “no prospect of peace, I determined, if possible, to get myself appointed for another circuit. But many of the Preachers being gone to their circuits, those that remained were unwilling to alter what had been done, so that the Conference broke up, and I remained upon the list for Bristol.”

On the 19th of August, when Mr. Benson left Bristol, he says, “I was in great perplexity of mind, not being able to determine whether to keep my appointment or not. Mr. Mather, Mr. Pawson, and Mr. Clarke, being with me in the coach, we had much conversation on the subject, and they all strongly advised me to go to Bristol as appointed.”

It is well known to persons of good sense and general knowledge, that great and sudden changes, even when eventually for the better, never take place in either civil or religious society, without being accompanied and followed by serious evils. So infinite wisdom has ordered matters, for the purpose of checking a restless and destructive spirit of innovation. The wisest and best of Statesmen maintain war to be an evil of such magnitude, that, in order to its having the sanction of reason and religion, it must be not only *just*, but *necessary*. Whether the changes which have taken place in the economy of Methodism, such as having preaching in church hours, and the sacraments administered by Methodist Preachers; which changes were not, nor, indeed, could be brought about without many destructive contentions; whether they were necessary, for the purpose of furthering the spiritual interests of the Methodists, will be differently decided upon by men whose views of *just* and *necessary* are contradictory. So much has been said on both sides of the question by men of piety, sense, and prudence, as is sufficient to prevent those who take the whole into consideration, from being dogmatical in their decisions upon either side of the question. It is a subject on which we cannot reason from theory, but facts. That the Methodists have been very prosperous, as a religious body, since the changes in question took place amongst them, is unquestionable; but whether they would have been more or less prosperous, had they continued to

adhere strictly to their original plan, it is impossible to determine. Mr. Wesley himself, reasoning from theory, was of opinion, that, after his death, one-third of the Preachers in his Connexion would enter into the Church, another third become dissenting Ministers, and that the remaining third, continuing to act consistently with the original principles of Methodism, in discipline as well as doctrine, would ensure the prosperity of Methodism to the end of time. Matter of fact has proved, that these conjectures were not founded in truth. Great and unexpected revolutions occasionally take place, both in the civil and religious world, the remote causes and consequences of which are known to Him alone whose understanding is boundless.

Mr. Pawson having come to Manchester on the 24th of August, Mr. Benson had much conversation with him on the subject of the Bristol business. "He now," says Mr. Benson, "dissuades me from going to Bristol." He then adds, "To-day my mind has been much perplexed; but far beyond, and even contrary to my expectation, I was much assisted in preaching at Salford in the forenoon, and at Oldham-Street in the evening. And the people were very much affected, especially in the forenoon, while I explained, 'Ye are not your own, but bought with a price.' In the evening, I enforced Deut. xxx. 19."

Mr. Benson, on being informed by Mr. Mather that he saw no reason why he should delay going to Bristol, set out with Mrs. Benson and his four children, in one chaise, for that city, on the 29th of August. In parting with him and Mrs. Benson, their Manchester friends were much affected.

On dreams in general, Mr. Benson laid no stress, and, consequently, recorded very few of his own, however remarkable. The following one, however, he recorded; and were it only for the encouragement he received from it, we deem it worthy a place in this work.

"August 30. Last night at Newcastle, I had a very remarkable dream. I imagined myself to be conveyed to the brink of a very rapid river, deep and wide, down which multitudes of men and women were floating, all apparently dead, and making not the least resistance against the stream. I was exceedingly struck and concerned at the sight. Upon going a little nearer, and observing them more attentively, I perceived, I thought, symptoms of life in some of them. They lifted up their eyes, and looked at me, as if desirous I should lend them help. This encouraged me to draw still nearer; and I thought I began to preach to them, and cry aloud, 'Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead,' &c. While I was addressing them in this language, I observed first one and then another, raise themselves up in the water, and make towards the land. And as I continued addressing them, I thought more and more, scores and hundreds, nay, thousands, escaped to the land."

Having thus related a dream, sufficient to make a deep impression on a mind as strong and well-informed as his own, and equally opposed to superstition; he says, "When I awoke, and reflected upon my dream, I found encouragement. I thought this river is time. Mankind are floating down the stream of it like a lifeless corpse. God has commissioned me to preach to them, and he will crown my labours with success." He then, modestly adverting to his new appointment, says, "I conceived a hope, too, that my labours at Bristol would not be in vain."

Though far from well in health, he preached at Birmingham, both in the forenoon and evening of the 31st of August, and at Worcester in the evening of the 1st of September. To his great astonishment, when he arrived at Gloucester, on the next day, he found several letters directed to him, which exceedingly pained his mind. They were all upon the unhappy subject of the flame of discord which was then raging in the Society at Bristol.

Arrived at Bristol on Sept. 3, he soon found that matters in the Society were in such a state of agitation, that he must so declare in favour of one of the contending parties, as to resolve not to preach in a certain chapel, from officiating in which one of the Preachers had been prohibited by the Trustees, on account of his having assisted in the administration of the Lord's Supper; and disobey, as he conceived, the order of Conference, or be prevented from preaching in Portland Chapel. He did not long hesitate to make a choice; which was to preach in all the chapels, if suffered, without entering into any engagement, and if not permitted to do so, to preach in those into which he could gain admission.

At the present period of Methodism, to enter into a controversy, the voice of which is no longer heard in the civil or religious world, whatever may have been its effects upon the interests of religion, would be foreign from our purpose, in endeavouring to furnish the public with a true portrait of a man, who was proverbial for his exertions to promote peace and unity amongst the followers of the Lord Jesus. Whatever may be our views of the grounds of that controversy, and of the manner in which it was conducted, together with the talents, piety, and principles of the contending parties; we cannot reconcile it to our idea of impartiality, to insert Mr. Benson's statement of the point then at issue, and his arguments in favour of every step he took in the affair, without faithfully recording what was urged in opposition to his statements and arguments, by his opponents. But, as it is impossible to do this, without occupying many pages to no valuable purpose; and as the contending parties amongst the Preachers lived in Christian amity with each other several years after the termination of the controversy; it is presumed that we may, without offence, dismiss the subject, so far as it is not necessarily connected with the life of Mr. Benson.

Under date Sept. 14, Mr. Benson says, "My time has been taken up the three last days in writing letters. But I have preached almost every evening either at the Room, or at Guinea-Street; but, alas! not to such congregations as we should have had, if this division had not taken place."

It is highly pleasing to be informed, that those unhappy contentions were sanctified by the God of all grace to the profit of many members of the Society. On the 12th of October Mr. Benson says, "Much of my time, last week, was employed in meeting classes; and I had the satisfaction of finding, that God has strangely over-ruled the division to the stirring of many of the people up, and bringing them into more intimate communion with himself."

About this time, though Mr. Benson's mind was severely exercised in consequence of the clashing sentiments of many amongst both the Preachers and people, he proceeded with his usual diligence in the faithful discharge of every ministerial duty.

Mr. Benson, after having dined and spent the evening with Dr. —, says, "He presses my applying for orders in the Church, and says he will assure my success. But I do not yet see my way clear. And yet, if our disputes are not settled, and our breaches healed in some way likely to promise tranquility, I had better be any where than in the Methodist Connexion."

It is gratifying to our best feelings to know that he had lived many years after those breaches were healed, and after that Connexion, so dear to him, had been restored to tranquility. To this desirable end, his wise and peaceable counsels largely contributed.

Great trials patiently endured, and sanctified by the influence of the Holy Spirit, are highly favourable to a growth in holiness. This, we doubt not, Mr. Benson proved at Bristol in the midst of the windy storm and tempest of trouble through which he had to pass. On November 23, he says, "This morning I had a precious time at the Room, while I explained the former part of the 78th Psalm. In the evening also, at Guinea-Street, I found liberty in explaining to a pretty good congregation, 'Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid.' I thank the Lord, that I enjoy a measure of inward peace amidst our outward trials, and I trust God will bring good out of the great evil of division."

And no doubt this proved to be the case; and to the attainment of an end so desirable, his appointment to Bristol largely contributed. His piety, learning, zeal, talents, and prudence, together with the veneration in which he was held by all parties, rendered him, to say the least, one of the fittest men in the Connexion to enter upon the difficult and delicate office of peace-maker. In addition to this, the ground which he took, and which was far from untenable, called forth the energies of his

mighty mind, and led him to give a powerful check to a *spirit* of innovation, by which some of the junior Preachers were manifestly influenced. No doubt, several of the old Trustees, who were not disposed to accede to any variation from Primitive Methodism, however imperiously called for by a change of circumstances, expected that Mr. Benson, rather than accede to the famous Plan of Pacification, would secede from the Connexion, at the head of a party of Preachers sufficient to occupy all their chapels; But in this conjecture they were completely mistaken; for he always maintained, and with the greatest reason, that the matters in dispute, however they might be determined, would not justify a division amongst the Methodists.

On Jan. 1, 1795, Mr. Benson, with the modesty and humility becoming a minister of Christ, says, "I have endeavoured to begin the year by a solemn act of dedication of myself to God; and I trust I have done it in some measure. This evening I endeavoured to improve the season for the good of the congregation, and to exhort all present, by the mercies of God, to present themselves a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. I trust many do, and will comply with the exhortation."

Of the 26th of January, Mr. Benson briefly remarks, "This has been a very severe and stormy day; nevertheless we had a pretty good congregation at the Room, and I was assisted in discoursing on the unsearchable riches comprehended in the redeeming acts of the Lord Jesus. I bless the Lord, I have enjoyed great peace of mind and comfort in God both yesterday and to-day."

The eagerness with which Mr. Benson grasped at every proposal which promised a reconciliation of the contending parties, both at Bristol and throughout the Methodist Connexion at large, is apparent from what he wrote on the 18th of February.—"Mr. Bradburn and I having exchanged some friendly letters, and there being some hopes of effecting a reconciliation, I have laid aside for the present the answer I had begun to Mr. Rhodes, and have employed these two days in writing letters, and considering of a plan on which all parties may unite."

On Feb. 21, Mr. Benson says: "Mr. Bradburn, Mr. Moore, and I, met at Kingswood this forenoon at eleven o'clock, and had much conversation together. We agreed upon a letter to the Preachers, containing the general outlines of a plan on which, it appeared to us, all parties might unite, and by means of which a division of the Methodist body might be prevented. This was the same in substance that I had previously drawn up."

The contents of this letter, agreed upon by those three eminent Ministers of Christ, formed the outlines of the Plan of Pacification, which, through the Divine blessing, has largely contributed to the peace, union, and prosperity of the Methodist Connexion. The plan in question,

replete with good sense, charity, and prudence, reflects great credit upon the heads and hearts of the men with whom it originated.

We find that upon the 5th of April, Dr. Coke and Mr. Moore breakfasted with Mr. Benson, and that they conversed for about two hours upon the affairs of Methodism. "I see," says Mr. Benson, "no immediate prospect of a reconciliation at Bristol; but I trust a general division will be prevented."

Under date March 14, Mr. Benson laments that so much of his time was occupied in a work very uncongenial to his feelings.—"This week," says he, "has been chiefly employed in writing letters. It grieves me exceedingly that so much of my time has been taken up, and is likely to be taken up, about these unprofitable disputes. O that God may put an end to them, and reconcile us all in love!"

The interest which Mr. Benson took at this time in the peace and unity of the Methodists at large, will in some measure appear from what he says on March 21. "This week I have been employed pretty much in meeting classes. The rest of my time has been employed chiefly in drawing up a general Plan of Pacification, which I have transcribed and sent to Mr. Mather, to be laid before the Manchester and Stockport Trustees, and to be copied and sent to Leeds, Sheffield, and Hull. I trust it will meet with acceptance in general, and that a re-union will yet take place amongst us."

This is the language of a man who followed after peace, thoroughly sensible of its importance for the purpose of promoting the interests of pure religion. Without the remotest idea of lessening, in the estimation of the reader, the piety, talents, or usefulness of any of his brethren in the ministry; we may, without fear or contradiction, assert that, on account of his faithful labours in the places to which he designed the Plan of Pacification to be forwarded, no other man in the Connexion had either with the Societies or Trustees, an equal share of influence. To him they looked up as to a leader in whom they could place the greatest confidence, from the high, but just idea, they formed of his piety, talents, judgment, and prudence. This confidence reposed in him was well founded; for, taking a comprehensive view of the state of Methodism at that period, and carefully guarding against all extremes, he proved himself to be one of the most efficient advocates for those wise and temperate measures to which, under God, the Methodists are chiefly indebted for their prosperity, and the respectable place they occupy as a part of the "Church Universal."

It is pleasing to record, that Mr. Benson, Mr. Bradburn, and Moore, who had, for several months, been divided in opinion on the subject of the disputes at Bristol, met at Kingswood, on the 1st of April, in the true spirit of Christian friendship. "To-day," says Mr. Benson, "the

Committee met at Kingswood, to settle the accounts of the Quarter. We had Mr. Bradburn and Mr. Moore with us; and I read to them the Plan of General Pacification which I had drawn up. They agreed to it, with a few exceptions; and if Mr. Mather, Mr. Thompson, and Mr. Pawson agree to it, they are willing that it should be printed with their names annexed. We had a friendly meeting; and I trust that peace and unanimity will return."

The spirit of love, by which Mr. Benson was actuated, led him, in opposition to sectarian views, to rejoice in the progress of true religion, whether in or out of the Established Church. On the 19th of April, he observes that he "attended divine service, and heard Dr. Campbell at Redcliff Church. He gave us an excellent sermon on 'Enter ye in at the strait gate,' &c. I found my mind much edified by it, and was refreshed to think that the truth is so clearly and fully declared *in* the Church, as well as *out* of it."

The views which all orthodox Christians form of the doctrine of Divine Providence, lead them, without hesitation, to advise all their brethren to submit willingly to all its dispensations; but how difficult do many of them find it to reduce their theory to practice! This seems to have been Mr. Benson's case, when on the 24th of April, he preached from 1 Pet. i. 6, 7. In the course of his sermon upon that passage, he took a general view of the temptations with which God's people are exercised, and the heaviness, grief, or distress they occasion. Having done this, exquisitely sensible of the necessity of divine aid, in order to reduce the doctrine of Providence to practice, he says, "O that I could more clearly see the hand of God in the trials I meet with, and learn from them those lessons they are designed to teach."

Before the 29th of May, Mr. Benson being informed that the printed letter containing a Plan of Pacification, signed by himself and Mr. Mather and Thompson, was universally well received in Cornwall; and that both the Preachers and people there were earnestly desirous of his paying them a visit, he concluded on acceding to their wish.

Mr. Mather and Mr. Pawson addressed a letter, about this time, to the Bristol Society, with a view to reconcile the contending parties. A copy of this letter Mr. Benson received on the 31st of May; and the day following, Mr. Moore, who had received a more correct copy of it, waited upon him; and they agreed, at the request of those promoters of peace and concord, to appoint the 26th of June, as a day of fasting and prayer.

Mr. Benson, in eager pursuit of peace, preached on the evening of June 1, from "Grieve not the Holy Spirit," &c. "I was," he says, "much assisted in preaching, and the Divine presence was amongst the people. Afterwards I met the Society, and read Mr. Mather and Paw-

son's letter, and spoke a little on the subject of peace. Most of all present were exceedingly affected; and they united in prayer, that the Lord would be with me on my intended journey."

How opposite are strife and contention to that blessed religion, which the Prince of Peace lived and died in order to establish upon earth! And with what joy do the humble followers of him, "who when he was reviled, reviled not again," grasp at every rational and scriptural proposal which may tend to banish discord from amongst brethren in Christ! The members of the Society at Bristol wept tears of joy at the prospect of a re-union of the parties, who had often taken sweet counsel together. The last of the seven abominations, every one of which God hates, is he "who soweth discord among brethren."

Having dispatched this part of Mr. Benson's history, which includes the Bristol dispute, we feel as if newly escaped from a gloomy and tempestuous region, in which man being set against man, the religious, as well as social tie is broken. From this time, the lowering tempest which threatened to crush in ruins the hitherto promising plant of Methodism, began to subside, so that with comparatively little interruption that plant has continued to flourish to the present time.

At six in the morning of June 2, Mr. Benson set out with Mr. Stock in a single horse chaise for the West. They arrived at Taunton in sufficient time for Mr. Benson to preach at seven in the evening. "The congregation," he says, "was good, and I was much assisted in explaining and applying, 'Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?'" Having preached at six in the morning, previous to his leaving Taunton, he proceeded to Collumpton, where he discoursed that evening and the next morning. He then, still accompanied by Mr. Stock, proceeded to Exeter, where in the evening he preached to a very crowded congregation. "We had," says he, "a most solemn time, while I enforced our Lord's exhortation, 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate.'"

On the 5th of June, Mr. Benson arrived at Launceston, after a long journey, and addressed in the evening a large and serious congregation, who, being deeply affected, proved they did not hear in vain. At St. Austell he preached on the 6th; and on the 7th three times, to crowded congregations. On his way to Truro, where he arrived on the 8th, he was met about half-way between St. Austell and that town, by many kind friends both from it and Redruth. At seven in the evening he addressed with much liberty and power a crowded audience.

In the course of his visit, Mr. Benson hitherto saw no extraordinary effects produced by the instrumentality of his ministry; but when he preached at Redruth, on the 9th of June, God accompanied the word with astonishing power. Not to give this part of the narrative of his tour at considerable length, would be to keep back what cannot fail to

profit every reader, who takes an interest in the spread of true Christianity.

"June 9. Never did I see a place so crowded, I think, and never did I see a congregation more affected than at Redruth to-night, while I discoursed on, 'Who is this that cometh up from Edom, with died garments,' &c. We were informed of several who were awakened, and of some that were justified. Many hundreds continued in prayer a great part of the night.

"June 10. The chapel being too small to hold a fourth part of the congregation at Tuckingsfield, I stood up in a field behind a house, having a wall and a bank behind, and on one side, on which some hundreds placed themselves, and the bulk of the congregation before me, consisting, I think, of about five thousand. After singing and prayer, I took for my text 1 Tim. i. 15. I had not spoken long before such ideas were presented to my mind, and words given me, that many were cut to the heart on all sides. Numbers were in tears, and many cried out in distress in different parts of the congregation. I continued speaking till I could speak no more. But I observed, before I concluded, that any who were in distress might retire into the chapel, and that some of our friends would pray with them. I then gave out a hymn and prayed.—One woman came up to me before I got off the table, and with streaming eyes, and a heart full of gratitude and love, declared what God had done for her soul. As soon as I had dismissed the congregation, numbers thronged into the chapel; and a gentleman's steward, who had been much affected under the sermon, was one of the first who fell down upon his knees before all present, and cried, 'Lord, humble my pride! Lord, convert my soul! O, let thy work in me be deep; and let me not turn back again!' Many more cried out in distress; and the Leaders, Local Preachers, and others, continued in prayer with them most of the night. As I was quite exhausted, I returned in a chaise to Redruth, with Mr. Stock. The next morning I was informed that near twenty in all, were brought that night to taste that the Lord is gracious; and many of our friends were of opinion that not fewer than *one hundred* were awakened under the sermon. Unto God be all the glory."

It is worthy of remark, that the text from which Mr. Benson preached when those glorious effects were produced, so far from being of a terrific nature, is one of the most encouraging passages contained in the Book of Inspiration.

"June 11. In the forenoon," says Mr. Benson, "I set out, in company with several friends, for the Copper-Works at Hayle, where notice had been given for me to preach at twelve o'clock. The chapel was much crowded, and several were affected, while I enforced, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand,' &c. Immediately after we went to St. Ives, where we expected to dine. In the evening, the chapel, which will hold

about one thousand five hundred persons, was crowded, and I was assisted in explaining and enforcing Luke xv. 7. The congregation was serious and attentive, but not so susceptible of good impressions as that I had addressed the preceding night."

On the 12th of June, Mr. Benson, having exerted himself beyond his strength the two preceding days, was so hoarse and otherwise indisposed, that he was scarcely audible at Penzance in the evening.

In the forenoon of June 13, accompanied by his friend Stock, he went to see the Land's-End, from the last rock of which he looked towards the sea, as if, to use his own words, he "had been looking over time into eternity." He then proceeded to St. Just, where he arrived in time for dinner. At seven in the evening he had a most crowded congregation; and many were much affected, especially while he reminded them that they were come almost to the Land's-End of life, and inquired whether they had come to the end of their sins, and whether they were determined to go into the wide ocean of eternal misery? Afterwards he returned into Penzance.

In the forenoon of June 14, he preached in the chapel at Penzance; it was excessively crowded, and the word was accompanied with more than ordinary power to the hearts of many. After having discoursed at a place called Mousehole at two in the afternoon, he was grieved that he had not preached abroad, as many hundreds who came to hear him could not get into the chapel. In the evening at Penzance, as the chapel would not hold one-third of the people who came to hear, he stood up in the Market-place, and addressed about six thousand hearers, on the awful subject of a "judgment to come." "Many genteel people," says he, "and some officers and soldiers, stayed all the time, and heard with great attention. Indeed the whole of the congregation was as quiet and silent as if in a church or chapel; and the word delivered seemed to produce a blessed effect on the multitude."

At some distance from Penzance, Mr. Benson, on the 16th of June, preached abroad to an attentive audience, on the necessity of receiving the Holy Ghost, in order to being either wise, or holy, or happy. "The word," he remarks, "seemed to fall like dew, or rain upon the mown grass."

After the conclusion of this service, he, accompanied by several affectionate friends, proceeded to Helstone; where, without his knowledge, it had been published for him to preach in the street. "I fear," says he, "that it was a lost opportunity; for although many attended, such were the noise and carelessness of those at a distance as to prevent that solemnity and seriousness with which the discourse would have been heard, had it been delivered in a chapel, or any quiet place." Fearing that the serious part of his hearers had not been much profited, Mr.

Benson preached, for their sakes, at seven o'clock the next morning, in the chapel.

He hastened to Tucking-Mill after breakfast, where it was published for him to preach at noon. "As," he says, "I felt myself very weak, and had hardly any voice, and as the preaching was to be at such an inconvenient hour, I was in hopes there would be no more people than the chapel would contain. But before we came within two miles of the place these hopes were cut off; for people were coming from all parts in such crowds, that it evidently appeared that several thousands would soon be assembled. And when we came within sight of the ground I was utterly astonished to see, not less, I believe, than eight or ten thousand people collected. Indeed one of our friends, who has since measured the ground on which they stood, computes there were, at least, ten thousand eight hundred persons present on the occasion.

"My heart sunk within me at the sight of them, because I did not think it possible to make them hear, and that I seemed to have nothing to set before them. I would have persuaded one of the preachers to stand up in my place, but could not prevail. I, at length, stood up; and after giving out a hymn, begged the Divine blessing on my five barley loaves and two small fishes. I then began to address the multitude in the language of our Lord, John vii. 37, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink,' &c. The Lord was pleased to multiply the spiritual food in the distribution, and there was, I believe, enough for all and to spare. Many were affected under several parts of the discourse, and wept much: and I was enabled so to speak as to be heard by most, if not all that were present.

"After dinner we hastened on to Gwenap. There, at seven o'clock, I found a congregation as large, or larger, than we had at Tucking-Mill. And while I explained and applied, 'By grace ye are saved through faith,' and offered a *free* and *full* salvation to the most guilty and the most vile, many on all sides felt the power of the word; and while hundreds, and even thousands, wept for *sorrow* or *joy*, some cried out in a manner that would have pierced a heart of stone. I spoke till the night came on, and I was quite exhausted. I then dismissed the congregation; but instead of going away, as many as could, immediately crowded into the chapel, where several of our Brethren joined in prayer with such as were in distress. About half an hour after, we heard that many of them had found peace with God, through faith in Christ, and of many more the next morning."

In the forenoon of June 18, Mr. Benson, accompanied by Mr. Flam-mock, set out for Penryn, where he spent a part of the afternoon alone, and in the evening explained to a crowded congregation, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." "It was," says he, "a solemn time, and many, I trust, felt the power of the word."

In the morning of June 19, Mr. Benson, accompanied by his friend Mr. Stock, proceeded from Penryn to Falmouth. "We spent," says he, "a part of the afternoon in viewing the Fort, an amazingly strong place, situated on the top of a high rock, which overlooks the sea and the entrance of the harbour, as also the town. I was much delighted with the pleasant situation of a part of the town, and with the delightful country about. In the evening, we had our large and commodious chapel, (the largest and best in Cornwall,) exceedingly crowded; and I was much assisted in explaining and applying to Calvinists and Arminians, to Ministers and people, 1 Cor. iii. 11, 'Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.' The whole congregation was as silent as death, and many seemed to feel the power of the word."

In the morning of June 20, Mr. Benson breakfasted with a pious and friendly Dissenter, in company with Mr. Wildboar, an Independent Minister. The conversation upon that occasion was, says Mr. Benson, "friendly and profitable." In the forenoon he returned to Redruth. Having to preach to a very large congregation on the following day, and not having completely recovered his voice, he wished to preach in the chapel, but this he soon found to be impossible; for immediately after he entered it, numbers began to crowd in, in such a manner, that the women, children, and such as were of low stature, began to be trodden under foot, and to shriek aloud. An attempt was made by two gentlemen to prevail on the people to enter the chapel gradually, but in vain. "One might," says Mr. Benson, "as well attempt to stop the flowing of the tide. To prevent the loss of lives, I got up upon a window, and cried aloud, that I would come and preach without. And it was well I did, as the chapel would not have held one-third of the people; the whole of whom heard with amazing attention and seriousness."

When Mr. Benson arrived at St. Agnus, on the forenoon of the 21st of June, he found that no more than about a sixth part of the people assembled could possibly get into the chapel; he therefore stood up in the street, and explained to a listening and deeply serious congregation, consisting of about five thousand, how "There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth," &c. "I found," he observes, "much comfort and enlargement in speaking, and many wept profusely under the word. I spoke about an hour and a half, and, blessed be God, was not hurt."

Having returned to Redruth, Mr. Benson, immediately after dinner, stood up in the street at the end of the Market-House; "when," he observes, "I was presented with such a sight as I never saw before. The whole street before me, as far almost as I could see, and all the alleys and houses on each side the street behind, on both sides of the Market-

House, and the Market-House above and below, were all crowded with people as thick as they could stand. Some of our friends calculated them at fifteen thousand; I think there could not be much less. They were all as silent and serious as night, while I explained Daniel v. 27. I continued preaching and praying from two to four o'clock. Many, I believe, felt the power of the word. Soon after I began, a post-chaise with company came; but being unable to get through the crowd they were obliged to unyoke the horses, and stay till all was over.

"We had hardly time to take a cup of tea, till it was time to go to the Pit, a kind of amphitheatre, where notice was given for my preaching at half past five. When I arrived at the place, and with much difficulty had got to the brow of that side of the hill, below which I was to stand; I was astonished at the amazing concourse of people assembled. Such a multitude I had never seen together before. It is supposed there were no fewer than twenty thousand. Although I was within a few yards of the place where our friends had fixed for me to stand, and although several friends assisted me to the utmost of their power, I could not get a step nearer to it. Finding it in vain to try any longer to get forward, I made two or three struggles, and got out of the crowd, purposing to stand in some other place, if a way were not made for me. At length a Captain of one of the mines, found means to make a kind of entrance, and I, at last, got to the place. Standing upon a table, I had a full view of the immense multitude, and had the satisfaction to find that I could make them all hear. After a solemn hymn on death and judgment, and prayer, I named Rev. xx. 12, 'I saw the dead small and great stand before God,' &c., as the subject of my discourse. I bless the Lord, I was endowed with courage, and favoured with liberty in speaking. The Divine power accompanied the word; and many, on all sides of the congregation, even on that side opposite and most remote, were much affected. Having reason to believe that many hundreds were under good impressions, and fearing they might be transient, to prevent this, I gave notice that I would preach next day in the chapel at Redruth, on the Parable of the Sower."

In the morning, at seven, the chapel was crowded; and while Mr. Benson showed how the different kinds of ground, mentioned by our Lord, illustrated the different sorts of hearers of the Gospel, many were deeply affected. Under that discourse one person entered into the glorious liberty of the children of God, and six were awakened from the lethargy of sin. In the evening he preached at Truro to some thousands of people, in a field at no great distance from the chapel.

In the evening of June 23, he preached to a large congregation at St. Austell, on Coloss. i. 27, 28. In the course of his sermon, he showed at large, 1. The subject-matter of the Apostles' preaching; 2. The manner of their preaching; and, 3. The end of it.

After preaching at Bodmin at twelve o'clock, he proceeded, in company with Mr. Maybin and Truscot, to Camelford, where he found a little chapel full of people, whom he addressed on the love of Jesus.

After dining at Camelford, Mr. Benson, accompanied by Mr. Maybin, set out for Liskeard, taking a guide with him, as he purposed going over the Moors. They soon entered upon them, and for about twelve miles saw little or no cultivated ground. "We passed," he remarks, "between several high mountains formed of mere rocks piled one above another, which mountains seemed evidently to have been formed by the Flood, and to have remained from that time. For while the water washed down the soft earth, on all sides, it could not wash down these rocks, but left them lying one above another in that tremendous and awkward state in which they appear. I was glad to find that there are, and have been, many other proofs of the Flood in this country. Mr. Mitchel, of Gwenap, told me, he had discovered, in digging below the sea, (which is often done in Cornwall,) a human skull, fifteen feet beneath low water; and that different kinds of ore are generally found under the sea, and in the low valleys, washed down from the higher grounds where these sundry kinds are found in the mines; which could only have been done at the time of the general deluge."

Mr. Benson arrived at Liskeard in sufficient time to preach. But there he had the mortification to find a congregation of a description opposite to those he had recently addressed. His description of it is:—"Such a wild, and apparently stupid, congregation, I have rarely seen any where, and certainly not in Cornwall. I endeavoured, but I fear to little purpose, to alarm them, by explaining and applying, 'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation.'"

Having preached at several other places, but not to such congregations as had heard him in different parts of Cornwall, nor apparently with such good effect, Mr. Benson, with his friend Mr. Stock, arrived at Bristol on the 3d of July. Finding Mrs. Benson and the rest of his family well, on his return home, he joyfully praised the God of all his mercies.

After preaching at several places on his way from Bristol to Manchester, where the Conference was held this year, Mr. Benson arrived there on the 23d of July. On the 26th he says, "I was graciously assisted in preaching before the Conference, and to an immense congregation, in the forenoon in Oldham-Street, on Eph. iv. 3, 'Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.' All were very attentive, and the generality of the people deeply affected, sundry times during the discourse. I believe it had, and will have, a good effect, and that the minds of both preachers and people will be disposed to peace and unity."

Under date August 8, Mr. Benson thus expresses himself, "Blessed be God, we have now not only got the Plan of Pacification sanctioned

by Conference, but have prevailed upon our friends from Bristol, to agree to terms of reconciliation."

Having arrived at Bristol on the 14th of August, he and Mr. Moore so adjusted matters on the 15th, that he preached in the forenoon of the following day at Portland Chapel, which was much crowded, while he was enabled, with clearness and power, to preach from 2 Cor. ii. 15, "We are a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved and in them that perish."

The congregation at Portland Chapel in the forenoon of August 23, was large and attentive; and many were much affected while Mr. Benson explained and applied 2 Cor. iii. 5, 6. At Guinea-Street in the evening, the chapel was amazingly crowded. "I was enabled," says he, "I trust to give the congregation faithful warning of their danger from Heb. iv. 1. I spoke plainly to the Society respecting the necessity of mutual forbearance, forgiveness, and love, if they wished to become the genuine followers of Christ."

Lady Mary Fitzgerald being at Bristol on a visit, Mr. Benson, under date Sept. 13, says, "I could not but admire her humility, condescension, and Christian love. She seems to prefer every one to herself, and, if permitted, would become, like her Lord and Master, the servant of all. Her conversation is very spiritual and edifying, and her simple, humble, free, and open behaviour, cannot but cause her to be beloved, at the same time that it makes her a blessing wherever she comes."

On the 16th of September, Mr. Benson, after conversing for some time with Lady Mary, at his own house, says, "How certainly is true Christianity the same, and its effects the same in persons of all ranks and conditions! Wherever it is, it levels, in a sense, all distinctions, and makes all one, in humility, meekness, and love."

Mr. and Mrs. Smith, of Dublin, being at Bath, invited Mr. Benson to dine with them on the 9th of October. "We had," says he, "Lady Mary Fitzgerald and several pious Ladies to dinner, whose conversation was as edifying as their manners were polite, and their whole behaviour easy and genteel."

Though all true friends to morality and religion reprobate the corrupt principles and hypocritical conduct recommended by Lord Chesterfield to his son, yet the more intelligent among them knew that his intimate acquaintance with high polished life, qualified him for the task of pointing out such parts of behaviour and modes of expression as are justly offensive to persons of taste and polished manners. That such were Mr. Benson's views upon this subject, appears from the following quotation. On October 9, he says, "I have spent the afternoon chiefly in looking over Lord Chesterfield's Advice to his Son, with a view to find out any thing in my behaviour which may be contrary to good breeding. For this, although of very trifling import, compared with

Christianity, is however not entirely to be despised by a Christian, especially by a minister of Christ, who ought to study to please all men for their good to edification."

In a large Independent chapel at Frome, Mr. Benson, on the evening of October 12, preached to a congregation consisting of nearly two thousand hearers. Among these were found Church people, Independents, Presbyterians, Baptists, &c. but their discordant opinions did not prevent them from listening with reverence and attention to him, while he explained and applied 1 Cor. iii. 11—13, "Other foundation can no man lay," &c. "The Lord," says he, "gave me liberty of mind, and I was enabled to deliver my own soul, and testify the truth as it is in Jesus." Having preached at Thornbury on the evening of November 1, but not with his usual liberty or comfort of mind, Mr. Benson was so harassed with reasoning upon the subject, that he could sleep none throughout the course of the night.

At a place called the Room at Bristol, Mr. Benson took his leave of a very crowded and deeply affected congregation, on the 9th of November by preaching from 1 John i. 3, 4. "The Lord," says he, "was with us of a truth, and the word, I trust, had free course. I thank God, the end for which I came to Bristol is, in a great degree answered. The breach is healed, and two Chapels, with about three hundred people, are preserved to the Connexion."

In the morning of November 10, Mr. and Mrs. Benson with all their children, (except their eldest son who set out a little earlier by coach,) left Bristol in a chaise; and they arrived at Gloucester at about five in the afternoon. At seven he preached in that city, to what he calls "a very small congregation." At Worcester, on the evening of November 11, he preached to a crowded congregation, who seemed to understand and feel the force of Divine truth; and at Birmingham, on the following evening, he preached to a very large audience, of whom he says, "I trust they did not hear in vain." At Derby, on the evening of November 13, his friends having published in both the town and country that he was to preach, he had a large congregation, who were remarkably attentive while he discoursed upon, "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God," &c.

Of his labours at Sheffield on the 15th of November, he gives the following brief account. "This day I have been enabled to preach three times to very large congregations. In the morning at seven, the Chapel in Norfolk-Street was as much crowded as though it had been a Sunday evening. That in Garden-Street was equally crowded at half past ten; and in the evening at Norfolk-Street, many who came to hear could not get into the Chapel. I bless the Lord, I have been much assisted every time; and we have had precious opportunities."

At the earnest request of Mr. and Mrs. Holy, at whose house Mr. Benson and his family were most kindly and hospitably entertained, he consented to preach at Sheffield on the evening of November 16. "We had," says he, "a crowded congregation, and a precious season, while I endeavoured to explain and apply, 'Why stand ye here all the day idle?'" On the following evening he preached at Wakefield to a large and attentive audience, who felt, as well as understood, the force of the truths he delivered.

Before we accompany Mr. Benson to his new appointment, it is fit to pause for a moment, and consider the calm and steady zeal which led him to embrace every opportunity that offered, from his leaving Bristol till his arrival at Leeds, to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. The care of his family, joined to the hurry and bustle consequent on travelling, did not, in the smallest degree, damp that ardour for which he was long and justly noticed in the service of his Divine Master, who "went about doing good." Surely he possessed much of a missionary spirit.

Arrived at Leeds, on the 18th of November, he expresses himself thus: "Thanks be to God for his care and kindness, and for giving his angels charge concerning us, through the whole of our long journey. We got to our journey's end in health and safety this day; and to our comfort found a servant in the house, and every thing provided for us. We have met with a very hearty welcome indeed from our friends, both relations and others, who have expressed great joy at our arrival. I pray God it may be for the good of many souls, as for our own edification and comfort."

The uneasiness which Ministers are apt to feel, while reflecting on the subjects they have chosen for public discussion, and the manner in which they have treated them are often unfounded. A case of this sort Mr. Benson notices under date November 22. "At half past five in the evening," says he, "the congregation at Leeds was exceedingly large; and although I was much tempted afterwards to think I had chosen a wrong subject, and that it was an opportunity lost, yet I have heard since of many that were stirred up and profited by it."

Under date January 1, 1796, Mr. Benson says, "Blessed be the Lord, who has brought me and my family to the beginning of another year." He then observes, that on the preceding evening at six o'clock, he preached at Armley, and then hastened to Leeds, where, by preaching at half past eight, he began a watch-night, which was continued till after twelve o'clock. "Having," says he, "praised God for the mercies of the past year, and cried to him for the pardon of the sins of it, and having offered ourselves afresh to God, we retired to rest, that we might be prepared for the duties of the day."

The 9th of March being a day set apart by Government for a General Fast, Mr. Benson, whose views of submission to the civil power were correct, because scriptural, preached at Leeds in the morning at eight o'clock, on "When ye fast, be not as the hypocrites;" at two he preached at Hunslet, on Is. lv. 6; and at night again at Leeds on Is. xxvi. 20, 21. "The congregations," he observes, "were attentive every time, and the Lord was with us. I trust that he will graciously answer the many supplications presented to him this day; and that he will yet send us prosperity."

On returning from the country to Leeds, about half past ten at night, Mr. Benson was surprised to find some of the Leaders, Local Preachers, and Stewards, holding a meeting in the chapel. "But," he says, "I soon found they were met to consider whether they should co-operate with some Leaders, &c. in the North, who have published a Letter, addressed to all the Stewards and Leaders throughout the kingdom, on the subject of altering our plan of governing our Societies, and putting the power every where into the hands of the Leaders and people."

Whatever severity might appear occasionally in Mr. Benson's manner or expressions in the warmth of debate, or in his controversial works, may be attributed to the sanguinity of his temperament, joined to his exquisite sense of what is just and proper, and his consequent dislike of whatever he conceived to be opposed to either the one or the other. He was emphatically a man of peace and love, and hence proved that he possessed much of that wisdom which is pure, gentle, and easy to be entreated. His unwillingness to grieve his friends, however opposed to their opinions, will appear from the following quotation.

"March 24. These two last days, I have been engaged chiefly in answering the above-mentioned Letter from New-castle; which, I think, I have done effectually. But as Mr. Smith and Mr. Longridge, intimate friends of mine, have had a principal hand in writing it, and as in some parts I have found it necessary to bear hard upon them, I feel a reluctance at publishing my answer."

This is the language of a man who could, with a good grace, adopt the language of the motto to his answer, *Amicus Socrates, amicus Plato; magis amica Veritas.*

From several passages in this answer, various traits of Mr. Benson's character, especially that which manifests his love of peace in consistency with truth in sentiment, and sincerity in intention and conduct, are apparent. The delicacy, friendship, and prudence, with which he begins his reply, could scarcely fail to affect the hearts of those whom he addressed. But the reader shall judge for himself.

"My dear Brethren,

"I was very sorry to have a printed Letter put into my hands, signed by your names. I have known many of you for upwards of twenty years, and with some of you have long been in habits of great intimacy. The Chairman of your Meeting, in particular, has been one of the most intimate friends I have had, ever since I was first in the Newcastle Circuit, which was in the year 1772. And I am grieved that you should have a hand in any thing that seems calculated to stir up strife among us, or to prove to any an occasion of falling. This, I am persuaded, you do not intend. I know most of you so well, that I give you full credit for what you assert respecting the *uprightness* of your intentions. But some of you have lived long enough in the world to have learned that, with the best intentions, we may inadvertently give occasion to much evil. With all the love and friendship I owe you, and still feel towards you, I will tell you freely why I think you have taken a false step in publishing this Letter, and wherein it appears to me you are mistaken."

Mr. Benson, after noticing the unsuitableness of the time, chosen for publishing the Letter in question, says, "Your Letter, it is true, may answer one end. It may draw the attention of some from the former causes of debate to others, and the contending parties may leave one *bone* to quarrel about *another*. But, alas! I fear they will find it equally *dry* with those about which they have so lately torn each other's flesh. Pray, my Brethren, for the Lord's sake, let the people for whom you profess to be so much concerned have some respite. Let them have a little time to remember they have souls to be saved, and to use those means that are calculated to save them. How long shall they be kept in the fire of *strife* and *contention*? When shall they be suffered to return from pursuing and smiting one another? Before the fresh bone of contention was thrown out, we were only two parties, the one wishing for, the other against, the introduction of the Sacrament. But now, so far as your Letter gains attention, and commands belief, we shall be four. For its natural tendency is to divide *both*, and produce two parties more, the one of which will espouse, and the other reject, your democratical form of church-government."

Having thus expressed himself, Mr. Benson, in the true spirit of a man of God, who saw the folly and danger of men's laying out their strength in maintaining opinions, the embracing of which all well-informed Christians know is not necessary to salvation, thus proceeds:

"In the mean time, it is not difficult to foresee the consequences which, in all probability, will ensue upon these proceedings. Like the Dissenters in the last century, we shall dispute about plans of government, and external ordinances, till the *life of religion*, and all that is worth contending for, be lost in the squabble; and we shall have nothing left

but the dry forms, which the divided parties, on each side, may have secured. You complain of a *wordly spirit*, of *division* in Societies, and of *want of love to the Preachers*; and yet you are taking, I fear, the very steps which partly proceed from, and partly tend to increase those evils. How happens it, think you, that the minds of so many are now turned to, and engrossed by those outward things, but because they have in whole, or in part, lost that *inward union* with God, which once was their all in all, and to guard and preserve which was once their chief care. And do you imagine that to keep them disputing about this and that mode of worship and Church-government, will restore what they have lost, and give them back their first love? O! no; it will only feed and increase their spiritual disorders. Remember, brethren, the Methodists very lately were not a people. Permit me then to inquire, by what means did they thus rise from nothing? Was it by plans of government and modes of worship? Surely no: but simply by the *Word of God*, and *Prayer*, with the exercise of that discipline, which some parts of your Letter are manifestly calculated to overthrow."

These are the sentiments of a man who knew well how to distinguish betwixt the "wood, hay, and stubble," with which too many attempt to compose the superstructure of religion, and the "gold, silver, and precious stones," which will bear a scrutiny by fire.

The authors of the Letter in question maintained, that the people composing a Church or Society, must, in order to be free, govern themselves by their personal decisions in popular assemblies, or by their representatives fairly elected. This unscriptural notion of Church-government Mr. Benson ably and successfully combats in the following paragraph. "As you quote a few texts to prove that the primitive Christians were virtually consulted in the choice of their spiritual guides, I must so far notice what you advance, as to desire you to turn to those texts again, (texts quoted by them,) and read them in connection with the context; and you will see that there is not one of them that bears the most distant allusion to any thing of the kind. Acts vi. 1, relates entirely to the choice of Stewards to manage the poor-money. Acts xv. 22, 23, relates to the choosing of three messengers to accompany Paul and Barnabas to Antioch, to carry a message. Acts xvi. 2, speaks only of the good character that Timothy bore among the brethren at Lystra, which it seems induced St. Paul to take him along with him as a companion; and the other passage, viz. 1 Tim. iii. 10, refers only to the *trial* that ought to be made of the *integrity* and *fidelity* of *Deacons*, that is, temporal Stewards, before they be put into office, and entrusted with the money belonging to the *Poor*, or the Church; so that if you can find no better proofs than these, that people ought to be consulted in the choice of their guides, you fall sadly short indeed. And, methinks, this circumstance alone might convince you that you are endeavouring to

draw us from a *scriptural* plan, to one that is *unscriptural*. It is true, in one sense, every man chooses, and must choose his spiritual guide; he is, and must be at full liberty to hear that Minister or Preacher he chooses, and to unite himself to that Society or Body of Christians, he judges he can be most profited amongst. But to suppose that the Scriptures countenance the idea of people choosing, or appointing their own Preachers, is, I am satisfied, without foundation. The Epistles to Timothy and Titus, to which I refer you, are a demonstration to the contrary. The Holy Scriptures take it for granted, what is certainly a truth, that the first and principal end of a Gospel Ministry is to *call sinners to repentance, and reform mankind*; and if sinners are only to be thus called, and mankind reformed by those they choose and appoint, they will never be reformed at all. For they will either choose and appoint *no* preachers, or such as will, by their doctrine and example, encourage them in, and not reprove them for, their sins. And although another, and very important end of preaching be to *edify*, or build up in faith and holiness, such as are already converted, yet it is *Christ*, and not the *people*, that gives Evangelists, *Pastors*, and *Teachers* for this end; that is, by the gifts and graces of his Spirit, he qualifies them for, and *calls* them to this work. Hitherto I believe we have been on the Scriptural Plan in this business, and if you should *unite*, and by *forming an Aristocracy*, compel us to change it, and adopt the Plan of the Dissenters, mark the consequences. Our congregations will soon be like many of theirs, either continually quarrelling with their Preachers, or divided and subdivided about the choice of them, while the one care and study of the Preachers must be, not to *profit* but to *please* their hearers, and especially those of them that are *rich*, on whom their maintenance will chiefly depend, and whom they must take care never to reprove for any thing amiss in their spirit or conduct. You talk of Itinerancy being at an end; but on the plan to which, if I understand, you are verging fast, it will be at an end indeed. For if our Societies or Circuits begin to choose their own Preachers, it cannot, in the nature of things, subsist two years: this would undoubtedly be agreeable to some of *us*, as well as *you*; we should get congregations among you, and be very comfortably settled, at least as long as we could find means of pleasing you and retaining your good-will. But the point to be considered is, would this be for the general good? for the spreading of religion in the nation? I presume the general opinion is, that it would not. Take heed, therefore, I beseech you, how you take those steps, which infallibly lead to it."

These sentiments cannot fail to obtain the approbation of all who form a scriptural idea of the Christian Ministry.

After confuting every argument brought forward by Mr. Smith, Longridge, &c. in support of the popular mode of governing the Metho-

dist Connexion, for which they contended, Mr. Benson, towards the close of his Defence of the Methodist Discipline, expresses himself thus :

“ While many, if not of *you*, yet of our people, who through us, or our predecessors in the work, rose from nothing, and are not a whit before some of us, either in abilities or diligence, have amassed great wealth, purchased estates, and built themselves houses of cedar, *we*, with our wives and little ones, are still dependent upon the contributions of others for a maintenance, removing from place to place, year by year, and day by day, and leading a pilgrim-like life, at *your call*, and to serve your eternal interests, if not even sometimes to gratify your curiosity and your itch for novelty. And why ? because we are in love with such an unsettled and wandering life ? Alas ! my brethren, you know little of human nature, if you think so. Make the experiment yourselves. Several of you are Preachers, and believe yourselves called to the work. Come out then, and go with us into the highways and hedges, travelling without intermission, from city to city, from town to town, from village to village, to publish the Gospel of the grace of God. Give up the gains of your trade and merchandise, leave your warm and comfortable habitations, with all your connections and engagements, and spend the rest of your few days in helping to *seek and save lost souls*. But if you *cannot or will not* do this ; if it be too great a sacrifice for you to make, at least let us request of you, not to discourage, and thereby hinder those that have already made it, or are disposed so to do. Do not weaken our hands in God, nor add to our burden, already greater than we know how to bear. But on the contrary, as I have, by experience, known many of you do in days of old, lighten it all you can, or assist us to bear it. Many a time did you refresh my bowels in the Lord, during the three years I laboured with unspeakable satisfaction and comfort, and I hope with some success among you. Your counsel and advice, your countenance and support, were not, at any time, withheld from the noble cause in which we were all engaged. Often did you accompany me on foot and horseback, when I went with a message of mercy to any town or village, to which Christ had not been preached, and, if there was any danger, stood foremost to meet it. I cannot forget those days, my brethren ; the recollection of them is pleasant, and draws tears from my eyes while I write. And shall we now fall out by the way, and after we have travelled on in company towards the heavenly Canaan so many years, shall we part at last, as though we were not directing our course to *one* and the *same* end ; *one Mount Zion, one city of the living GOD, one heavenly Jerusalem ?* Are we not the servants of *one Lord*, the children of *one Father*, and the heirs of *one inheritance* ? Have we not long professed *one faith*, and believed ourselves to be called in *one hope of our calling* ? And are we not *members of one body*, inhabited by *one Spirit* ? Let us then love as brethren, and be

pitiful and courteous. Let us feel for and sympathize with one another, and all the followers of our common Lord."

So timely and able a Defence of the Discipline of the Methodists, as that we have been considering, and from the pen of a man so venerated by all parties, had a powerful tendency to check the rash and daring spirit of innovation, which was at that time prevalent in several parts of the Methodist Connexion.

After preaching at several places on his way to Hull, Mr. Benson arrived at that town on the 28th of April. "After an absence of seven years," says he, "I have again seen my friends in this town, and have been refreshed with the sight of them. The congregation has been large to-night, and very attentive, while I explained and applied the Parable of the Sower, from Matt. xiii. 3."

Having slept little or none on the 30th of April, Mr. Benson was far from being in a good state of health the next day; however, such was his ardour in his Master's service, that in the course of that day, he preached twice at Hull, and once at Beverley. The labour of that day, which, as he observes, was not easy, he says he was enabled to perform with a degree of satisfaction to himself.

Dining at Hull, on the 2d of May, in company with the Rev. Mr. Milner and Dikes, he had much conversation with those pious Clergymen respecting the late revival of religion at Hull, and in other parts of Yorkshire. "I found," he observes, "the irregularities and disorders attending the revival, had greatly prejudiced their minds against the revival itself. Although I could by no means justify those irregularities, yet I endeavoured to persuade them that in the midst of them much good had certainly been done."—This is the sober and judicious language of a man, who knew well how to distinguish betwixt a revival of the work of God, and the accidental irregularities with which, through the weakness and ignorance of some well-meaning individuals, it is sometimes accompanied.

On the 8th of June, in going to the place where he was to preach, he passed by a great house of a gentleman, who, though possessed of 3000*l.* a year, had involved himself so deeply in debt, that he was obliged to retire into a foreign country, in order to retrieve his circumstances. Mr. Benson, whose habitual seriousness led him to make a profitable use of every occurrence which attracted his attention, says on the occasion: "Alas! what are riches to the man who, instead of using, only abuses them to his own ruin, and, it may be, also to that of others!"

The 18th and 19th of July, Mr. Benson chiefly employed in preparing for his journey to London, where the Conference was held this year. Previously to his leaving Leeds he held a Prayer-Meeting, expressly for the purpose of praying for a blessing upon the approaching Conference. "And," says he, "a most affecting and refreshing time we had while

together. Most present, I believe, were filled with confidence, that the Lord would answer their prayers."

Accompanied by Mr. Highfield, from Wakefield, he proceeded to Sheffield, on the 20th of July, where he arrived in time to preach in the evening. He says, "The congregation was very large, the chapel being quite crowded; and I was assisted in explaining, 'So run that ye may obtain.'"

About this time Mr. Alexander Kilham, one of the Methodist Preachers, in common with a few others of his brethren in the ministry, contended that in order to prevent the Conference from being tyrannical, they must admit into their assembly a number of individuals chosen in all the circuits, and that these should, in point of legislating for the body at large, possess equal powers with the Preachers. In proof of his and their opinions, Mr. Kilham had published several inflammatory pamphlets, tending to bring the Fathers of Methodism into contempt, by groundless insinuations.

In the forenoon of July 23, Mr. Benson arrived in London, when, after having conversed with several of the Preachers, he found that they, together with himself, were decidedly of opinion, that Mr. Kilham ought not to be suffered to remain in the Connexion.

On the 24th of July, after having heard Dr. Coke preach at the City-Road Chapel, he mentions, that he had a profitable time at the Lord's Table; but adds, "I was grieved at the custom which prevails here of the people going out as soon as they have partaken of the elements, which renders the ordinance far less solemn and less profitable than it would otherwise be." If this custom, in vindication of which few persons of sense or religion would be disposed to argue, yet prevails at the City-Road Chapel, it is to be hoped, that the many very intelligent and pious persons who attend divine worship there, will, on recollecting the many refreshing seasons with which they were favoured under Mr. Benson's ministry, hear him, as speaking from the eternal world, and relinquish it, as incompatible with the solemnity and decency of public worship.

Mr. Benson preached at the City-Road Chapel, on the evening of Sunday, July 25. His text, upon that occasion was, 1 Cor. iv. 1; "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." Then for the first time, the author of this memoir heard him preach. This sermon was in his best style, in point of doctrine, arrangement, and language; but the best of all was, that it was accompanied by a more than ordinary portion of the divine unction. Of this discourse and its effects, Mr. Benson, with his wonted modesty, says, "I thank the Lord, I had much liberty in speaking; and, I believe, it was a very profitable time to many."

The following pleasing account of the Conference we find under date August 6: "Our is business now almost finished, and, upon the whole, has been transacted with peace and unanimity; all the Preachers being determined to abide strictly by the Plan of Pacification made last year, so that the sacrament, and service in church hours, &c. have not been allowed any where, but according to the plan. Thus, the strife excited by Mr. Kilham's publications has wrought the right way; it has tended to open the eyes of the Preachers, who were violent for the dissenting plan, to the effects of their own measures. They have seen, that the people who have been eager for the sacrament, &c. if they could have their will, would overturn our whole system. This, they believe, would terminate in the entire subjection of the Preachers to the people; and in the utter loss of all discipline; therefore, they are against a plan that evidently leads to such consequences."

These sober and just observations remind us of what we have often observed, viz. that the effects produced by the atrocities which accompanied the French Revolution, have been highly favourable to the advancement of political science, and tended to bring into deserved contempt the absurd doctrine of *Annual Parliaments* and *Universal Suffrage*. It holds equally good in church as well as civil government, that several theories which, on a superficial view, seem founded in truth, are demonstrated to be false, by an attempt to reduce them to practice.

At this Conference, Mr. Kilham, of whom we should be sorry to think harshly or uncharitably, was expelled from the Methodist Connexion.—The following is the final and unanimous judgment of the Conference in his case:—

"Whereas Mr. Kilham has published to the world so many particulars so highly injurious to the characters of Mr. Wesley and the body of the Preachers, and declared himself able and willing to substantiate his charges before the Conference; and, notwithstanding, on his trial, was not able to substantiate a single charge; the Conference, on due consideration of the whole body of evidence, together with the disunion, confusion, and distraction, which Mr. Kilham's pamphlets have made through the Societies, do unanimously judge Mr. Kilham unworthy of continuing a member of the Methodist Connexion."

On the 6th of September, Mr. Benson began an Answer to Mr. Kilham's account of his trial, in which he defended the conduct of the Conference in his expulsion. This answer, in common with his other works, is an able and judicious performance, though a few expressions in it may be considered as rather too acrimonious. But, be this as it may, he fully proves his point,—that the Conference was justified in expelling a man, who not only *opposed* his private opinion on the subject of governing the Connexion, to the unanimous vote of all his breth-

ren, but resolved to *act* upon that opinion, though at the expense of dividing numerous Societies.

Towards the close of his Defence, to which those excellent men of God, Mr. Mather and Mr. Pawson, annexed their signatures, he, after mentioning the readiness of the Conference to comply with every reasonable request of the Societies, says :—

“Now, dear Brethren, what have you to object to this? What is there unreasonable or unscriptural in the plan of our proceeding? Wherein can it be altered for the better? If you say it is liable to abuse, we own it is. But we ask, What is not? *Is there, or was there ever, or can there be any plan or system, civil or religious, which is not, or has not, been liable to abuse? Was not the economy of heaven itself abused, and that by angels?* All that we can do, dear Brethren, is to guard against abuses of every kind, as far as human prudence and foresight can go, or to remedy them when they occur. This we have done from year to year, and, by the help of God, purpose to continue to do. In this we desire both your prayers and advice, from time to time. The cause is God’s, and it is infinitely important. It involves the present and everlasting salvation of thousands of his rational and immortal offspring.”

Through every part of Mr. Benson’s religious and ministerial career, he was in the habit of calling the attention of the people from matters of doubtful disputation to the grand doctrines and precepts of Christianity.

On the evening of November 10, Mr. Benson, who was much in the habit of preaching occasional sermons, delivered one at Bramley, on account of the death of John Hutchinson, whom he describes as an upright and exemplary Christian, who had, for years, been exercised by a variety of difficulties in temporal matters. With great patience and resignation to the Divine Will, he endured a long affliction. He died, not only in great peace, but unspeakably happy. “I bless the Lord,” says Mr. Benson, “I preached with comfort and a degree of effect.”

Mr. Benson mentions, that for some time about the 22d of November, he had been employed in reading Mr. Milner’s Church History. He observes, “I found the following passage, quoted from Augustine’s Christian Doctrine, particularly useful. ‘Let our Christian orator, who would be understood and heard with pleasure, pray before he speaks. Let him lift up his thirsty soul to God, before he pronounces any thing. For since there are many things which may be said, and many modes of saying the same thing, who knows, except him who knows the hearts of all men, what is most expedient to be said at the present hour? And who can cause us to speak as we ought, unless he in whose hands we and our words are? And by these means, he may learn all that is to be taught, and may acquire such a faculty of speaking as becomes a

Pastor. At the hour of speaking itself, a faithful spirit will think his Lord's words adapted to his circumstances, *'Think not WHAT or how ye shall speak; for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you.'* If the Holy Spirit speaks in those who are delivered up to persecutors for Christ, why not also in those who deliver Christ to learners. Prayer and study, however, must go hand in hand."

The following is Mr. Benson's account of how he ended the 31st of December. "I have been much distressed with a pain in my face all day, and have otherwise been rather poorly to-day. But, I thank God, I have been enabled to preach this evening with much liberty, on 1 Pet. iv. 7, 'The end of all things is at hand.' We have had a very large congregation, and a most solemn and profitable time. Few persons went away till after twelve, when we introduced the new year."

Mr. Benson's account of how he spent the 1st day of January, 1797, is as follows: "Although I slept but little last night, nor indeed for some nights past, yet I have been enabled to preach three times to-day, and to hold a meeting for renewing our covenant with God. I was much assisted, and the people were affected. At the Covenant meeting, at night, as well as at the preaching, my mind was much enlarged, and the Lord was very present. The congregation in general was attentive, and I believe great numbers were refreshed and comforted. My own mind was much affected, and I trust I shall be enabled to live more to God this year than I have done in any preceding one of my life."

Whitby's Notes upon the New Testament have long been highly and justly esteemed by the most pious and intelligent maintainers of the doctrine of General Redemption; and even by those who receive its opposite, but have sense and candour sufficient to prevent their considering its reception as necessary to salvation. Whitby is, properly speaking, one of the first of original Commentators; nor can his work upon the New Testament fail, upon the whole, to obtain the approbation of such pious and intelligent readers as have sense and discretion, in all cases, to distinguish betwixt matters of faith and matters of opinion.

Mr. Benson's opinion of that Commentary is well worthy of insertion. "January 20.—I have employed some time these two last days, in reading, with much attention, Dr. Whitby's Notes on those passages of Scripture which respect the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, and a future state; as also his discourse, subjoined to his Notes, on the Millennium. And I have found what he has advanced on these subjects, in general, very satisfactory, and strengthening to my faith and hope, as well as refreshing and comforting to my mind. And, since I read him on the subjects in question, I have found more than usual nearness to God, and confidence in him, with a hope full of immortality."

The 29th of January was to Mr. Benson a day of great labour, but at the same time of more than ordinary support and comfort. "I have," says he, "had a very hard day indeed, having preached at the Forge in the morning at seven, at Bramley at nine, and at half past one, and met the society, and again at Armley, at five, and afterwards met the society. I had liberty in speaking every time, and the congregations were large. I have also enjoyed great peace of mind, and have had strength equal to my day. 'Bless the Lord, O my soul!'"

The sentiments contained in the following paragraph, which bears date February 16, are so just as to ensure the reader's acceptance.—"I have spent four very comfortable and profitable days, chiefly, in writing, reading the Hebrew Scriptures, and in prayer. This morning, in particular, I was much comforted in reading Genesis xiv. respecting Melchizedek's meeting and blessing Abraham; and chapter xv. respecting his faith in God, when he promised that his seed should be as the stars, and God's entering into covenant with him, and representing the affliction his posterity should suffer by the smoking furnace, and their deliverance afterwards by the burning lamp, passing between the two pieces. I never before had either such a discernment of the meaning of the passage, or was so profited in reading it. My mind, too, was much enlightened and confirmed in the faith of the Gospel, and I found peculiar confidence and nearness to the Lord in prayer, believing that he would hear and answer my petitions for myself, that I might be made more *holy* and *useful* than ever; for my family and the church of God, and the nation now in great distress. O how sweet I found it to plead with God, and how unwilling I was to be interrupted!"

It frequently happens that in the course of a day, Preachers of the Gospel, while ministering the word of life, feel their minds alternately elated and depressed; and that without being able to assign any other reason, than the will of Him who affords them more or less enlargement of heart and liberty of expression, according to the infinitely wise counsel of his own will. A case of this description, Mr. Benson notices, under date February 26:—"At Chapel Town, this day at noon, I had much liberty, and we had a precious opportunity; but at Leeds, both morning and evening, I was much straitened, and had very little either of confidence or comfort; which has distressed me much. O that I could trust more in the Lord, and resign myself more to him, that I may be assisted or deserted just as it pleases him! But alas! I am far from having attained this resignation!"

To those who lay no undue stress upon the adventitious circumstances in which human beings are placed, and consequently, who know that the soul of a servant-maid is as valuable as that of a princess, the following account, given by Mr. Benson, of the conversion of his servant,

cannot fail to be interesting. Under date March 4, he says, "Blessed be the Lord, he has this morning visited our servant ———, in mercy. For upwards of three weeks, since she heard me preach on, 'Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting,' she was in great distress of mind, intolerably burdened with a sense of sin, so that she could with difficulty either eat, drink, or sleep, or do her work. And at last the misery of her mind exceedingly affected her body. Though she frequently wept, yet she maintained that her heart was very hard, and said, that she was strongly tempted to think that she should never find mercy. Indeed, she was on the brink of despair. But last night, being prevailed upon to go to bed, about eleven o'clock a thought struck her mind, that God is said to be found of them that did not seek him. If so, she reasoned, surely he will be found of me who do seek him. Encouraged by this consideration, she rose out of bed, fell down on her knees, and prayed earnestly to God for mercy. She soon experienced some comfort, and before three o'clock was so filled with peace and joy in believing, that no doubt of her acceptance with God remained on her mind."

The moral excellence of a man who has thus recorded the process of conviction for sin in the mind of his servant, and her subsequent deliverance, cannot be duly estimated by any who are not thoroughly sensible that there is no respect of persons with God.

Mr. Benson's truly Christian and patriotic spirit, appears in the mention he makes of every providential interference he notices, in favour of his beloved country. Hence, on March 6, he thus expresses himself: "I thank God, he yet defends us. We have just received intelligence that Admiral Sir John Jervis, with fifteen ships of the line only, has obtained a signal victory over the Spanish fleet, consisting of twenty-seven ships of the line, and taken four of their ships. Their Admiral's ship, of 130 guns, had struck to ours, but was afterwards got off by five of theirs. It was expected, however, that she will be recovered, as three of our frigates were sent after her."

Mr. Benson, who did not cease to care for any people over whom he had ever been appointed to watch, learning that some discontents prevailed in the Halifax Society, hastened thither, on the 23d of March, in order if possible, to restore peace and harmony. His own account of his visit to that place, is as follows: "Being informed of some discontents among some of our friends at Halifax, respecting our plan and affairs transacted at the District Meeting and at the Conference, and that they had drawn up an Address to the Preachers and People, with a view to publish it; having previously written to them once and again, at the request of Mr. ——— and some others, I rode thither to-day, and met, and endeavoured to satisfy the parties. I hope, with regard to

several of them, my labour has not been in vain. In the evening we had a very crowded congregation, to which I preached on the nature and sin of Schism."

That desire so prevalent in Mr. Benson to promote peace and love amongst the followers of the Lord Jesus, led him to speak and act in a manner so conciliatory, that some, who did not know the man, attributed it to either pusillanimity or an undue attachment to a party. Reproach similar to this, from those who violently contend for things in their own nature indifferent, all who seek peace, in the true spirit of peace, may expect; but in the mean time their hearts do not reproach them, nor can they fail to enjoy the beatitude to which the Prince of Peace entitles characters of their description,—*Blessed are the Peacemakers!*

On the 16th of April, we find that Mr. Benson, after preaching at Leeds, proceeded to a place called Kippax, where, at noon, he opened a new chapel. The congregation was large; and he was much assisted while he explained and applied Luke xxiv. 46, 47. Immediately after preaching he set out for Pontefract, where with much enlargement of heart and liberty of expression, he addressed a crowded audience in the evening. At half past one on the following day, he preached to a large congregation at Selby, from "Lovest thou me?" Many were much affected. Being met at Selby by Mr. Clarkson, junior, of whom he speaks in strong terms of esteem and affection, as a man of sense and piety, he proceeded, in company with him and Mr. John Bell, to Howden, where he preached at seven in the evening to a large and attentive congregation. Having on the 18th of April discoursed at three different places, he arrived at Hull on the day following, where he preached to a crowded audience, and again on the 20th, upon the subject of Peter's denying Christ.

On the 23d of April, he says: "In the morning I was assisted in explaining and applying Mark xiii. 37, 'What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch;' and still more in the evening, while preaching for the benefit of the Infirmary. Many seemed to feel the power of the word."

On the 25th of April, Mr. Benson took leave of his warmed-hearted friends at Hull, and proceeded to Weighton, where he addressed a pretty large congregation, at seven in the evening. Accompanied by his friend Mr. Clarkson, junior, he then proceeded to the house of Mr. Clarkson, senior, at a place called Holme, where he preached, with great satisfaction, at nine o'clock the next morning, to many hearers. He then hastened, still accompanied by the same friend, to Bubswith, where he had engaged to open a new chapel, just built by Mr. Clarkson and Mrs. B——. It was much crowded. After the service was concluded, he proceeded, in company with his friend Clarkson, who delighted to be the companion of his travels, to Pocklington, where he discoursed at

seven in the evening. "I found," says he, "my old friend Mrs. Cross alive, although feeble in body; she is steadfast in the faith, and happy in God." Having preached at Elvington on the morning of the 27th of April, he proceeded to York, where he dined in company with the Rev. Mr. Graham, and several other pious and respectable individuals. He remarks, "We spent the afternoon agreeably together, and at seven I preached with a degree of liberty, to a pretty large congregation, on Dan. ix. 24." Arrived at home on the 28th, he says, "I bless the Lord for his kindness to me on this journey, and that, on the whole, I have experienced his manifest direction and care."

It appears that Mr. Benson, in all his excursions to visit his friends, imposed upon himself tasks equal to what he was in the habit of performing in the circuits in which he travelled. To "ignoble sloth," he was, both from principle and habit, a determined foe.

The Preachers of the Leeds District met at Leeds, on the 24th of May, to hold, according to custom, their annual meeting. For a time, they all seemed united in love to each other, and determined to labour together as formerly. But on the 25th it was found, that Mr. H. T. and Mr. W. B. had determined, that should the Conference not comply with, and adopt their Rules, they would separate from their Brethren. Mr. B., who, however erroneous in some of his views, was a man of eminent piety, said, that "They had drawn up Rules for a separate Connexion; not having intended to unite with Mr. Kilham on the one hand, or the Conference on the other; that they had communicated this to several Local Preachers and others, who had promised to stand by them; and that they had come to the District Meeting with a view to separate, if we did not comply with, and adopt their Rules."

"I now considered," says Mr. Benson, "what was best to be done, and concluded that the best way would be to endeavour, by gentle treatment, to prevent a breach, at least till Conference; but if this could not be accomplished, for some of us to go over to Sheffield, to save as many of the people as possible."

Here it is proper to observe, that though both those Preachers consented, and we believe with the utmost sincerity, to labour in conjunction with their brethren; yet it was not in their power, afterwards, to quench the destructive fire of contention at Sheffield, which, if not kindled by them, they supplied with abundance of fuel. Even good men, and with the best intentions, (for a good intention never changes into right what in itself is wrong,) may, in a short time, by misguided zeal, produce such strife and debate as will, to the scandal of religion, be perpetuated from generation to generation.

On the 1st of June, Mr. Benson, who was feelingly alive to the interests of his country, in both a civil and religious point of view, observes, "My mind has been greatly depressed with a consideration of

the awful and dangerous state our nation is in, especially from the mutinying of the sailors on board most of the fleets, and from the French having made peace with the Emperor, and evidently purposing to bend all their strength, by sea and land, against this country.”

That at this time disaffection to Government was very prevalent, not only amongst the lower orders of society in England and Ireland, who, unless led on by men of talent, wealth, and fame, can never overthrow any Government possessed of even a moderate share of strength; but also by several in the higher walks of life, who proceeded in their opposition to our wise, energetic, and lenient Government, to the utmost limit which they conceived compatible with their personal safety, is well known to all who are thoroughly acquainted with the history of that stormy period. Methodism, likewise, which Dr. Buchanan says “implies loyalty to the King of Kings,” as if sympathizing with that civil government, under the mild auspices of which it had so long prospered, was at this time threatened with a destructive revolution. But that God, in whose hands are the hearts of all men, so regulated the storms and tempests with which the one and the other were then agitated, as to render them subservient to the honour, strength, and stability of both.

Under date June 20, Mr. Benson mentions his having read with attention a Pamphlet written by John Gifford, Esq., in answer to Erskine’s View of the causes and consequences of the war which was then raging. “Erskine’s View,” though extremely popular during the prevalence of the democratical mania, which about that time threatened the overthrow of all that deserved the name of regular and legitimate governments upon earth, has fallen into the neglect which it justly merits. But let us hear Mr. Benson’s remarks upon Gifford’s answer to that flimsy, though then popular performance.

“I have read with attention a Pamphlet by John Gifford, Esq., and I am of opinion he has answered Erskine completely. The indubitable proofs he has produced of the *Atheism*, profaneness, and shocking enormities of those who have been at the head of affairs in France, may well silence the advocates for French liberty and French principles. Among other things, he observes, that on the 14th of December, 1792, in a debate on the establishment of public schools, M. Dupont, a member of the National Convention, said: ‘What! thrones are overturned! sceptres broken! Kings expire! and yet the altars of God remain!’ He proceeded to propose the abolition of those altars, and proclaimed himself an *atheist*, amidst the reiterated plaudits of the Assembly, and of persons in the galleries. The blasphemous doctrine, that *death is an eternal sleep*, was sanctioned by the authority of the Legislature. By the same power, the abolition of the Christian era was proclaimed, and the Saviour of the world made to yield precedence to the Republic of France. On November 7, 1793, the *existence of God* and the *immor-*

ality of the soul were formally disavowed by the Convention, and the *resurrection of the dead* declared to have been only preached by superstition for the torment of the living. Two days after, all the religions in the world were declared to be the daughters of ignorance and pride; and it was decided to be the duty of the Convention to assume the honourable office of *diffusing* truth, (that is, Atheism) over all the world; and, as a part of this duty, the Assembly decreed, that its *express renunciation of all religious worship* should, like its invitations to rebellion, be translated into all foreign languages. It was stated and received in the Convention, that *the adversaries of religion had deserved well of their country!* The Temple of the Almighty was profaned by the worship of a prostitute, personating the Goddess of Reason; and the Cathedral of Paris exhibited the monstrous spectacle of a pagan sacrifice. And lastly, on the 30th of November, 1793, the pupils of a new republican school appeared at the bar of the Convention; when their Leader declared that he and his school-fellows *detested God!* that instead of learning the Scriptures, they learned the *Declaration of Rights*, and made the Constitution their catechism. And the President of this Pandemonium expressed the satisfaction of the Convention at the declaration they had made; the young demons were *admitted to the honours of the sitting, and received the kiss of fraternity amidst the loudest applauses."*

It is not strange, considering the absurdities and abominations by which many have disgraced humanity, that Young, who maintains, that moral madness is that of the heart, describes earth as the "Bedlam of the Universe." Of this general Bedlam, the French, for several years, occupied the ward including such as afforded the least ground to hope for their return to reason. How far, as a nation, they have recovered from their Infidel and Political frenzy is still problematical.

It is to be lamented, that truths the most efficacious in order to the cure of moral diseases, are least relished by those to whom they are most applicable. Of the truth of this observation Mr. Benson seems to have been persuaded on the 21st of July. "I ventured to recommend unity this evening, by discoursing on Eph. iv. 3, 'Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.' But it is impossible, I believe, to preach at Leeds on such a subject, without offending some. However, I have the satisfaction of endeavouring to do my duty."

Having taken leave of his very affectionate friends at Leeds, on the 31st of August, Mr. Benson, with Mrs. Benson, and their four children, set off for York in a chaise, where they arrived in the afternoon; there they were affectionately received and hospitably entertained by their excellent friend Mr. Robert Spence. At seven in the evening he preached with much liberty on "So run that ye may obtain;" the

congregation was large and attentive, and many of them considerably affected.

Mr. Benson, with his family, arrived in safety at Hull, on the 1st of September. On mentioning this circumstance, he says, "Blessed be God for all his mercies! Although the house is not equal to that we left at Leeds, either for size, convenience, or situation; yet I trust God will give us peace and comfort in it, which I beg he may, and at the same time give us to see his work flourish."

The evening of September 6, Mr. Benson had the pleasure of spending in company with the late learned and pious Dr. Milner, his excellent brother, Mr. Thompson, and Arthur Y——, Esq. In the course of conversation, which soon became interesting, it appeared that the last mentioned of those gentlemen was under serious impressions. "He informed us," says Mr. Benson, "that God had lately taken from him a darling child, which had shown him the vanity of all below, and greatly awakened his mind to a sense of eternal things; and just at that time a kind Providence had put in his way Mr. Wilberforce's late excellent Publication.* He said that he had carefully read that work no less than four times, and had found increasing light and conviction every time, and that he had never before heard or read such doctrine as it contains. He seemed indeed to be quite awakened; and he was much afraid lest he had not felt sufficient sorrow on account of his having lived so many years without God in the world. The conversation of all present was chiefly directed to give him light and comfort."

Under date September 27, Mr. Benson says, that the affairs of the Huddersfield Circuit were in a most distracted state; that the Trustees of the Huddersfield Chapel had shut it against the Preachers, and received Mr. Kilham, Mr. Thom, and their helpers. Most of the Society at Huddersfield went over to the seceding party, and several in other parts of the Circuit. In the Halifax Circuit, about two hundred members of the Society joined what they termed the *New Connexion*. About that time, several chapels, in various parts of England, were, by their respective Trustees, shut against the Preachers who travelled by the appointment of Conference. About five thousand members, amongst whom there were many Leaders and Local Preachers, then left their brethren, and united themselves to Mr. Kilham and his party. But in the midst of the storms and tempests which agitated the Methodist Connexion at that eventful era of its history, God so accompanied the labours of the Preachers by the powerful workings of his Spirit, that the numbers in Society, at the ensuing Conference, were found to amount to upwards of fifteen hundred more than they had been previous to the division; and, in the course of the following year, the increase amounted to upwards of six thousand members.

* Practical View.

Mr. Benson, on the 2d of December, paid his friends a visit at Bridlington Quay. "I find," he remarks, "my old friend, Captain Robinson, confined, through a hurt he has lately received in his leg, but resigned to the Divine Will, and happy in his affliction. His pious partner is going on steadily in the Lord's ways."—Under date December 3, we find the following paragraph: "I thank God I have been much assisted every time in preaching this day. In the afternoon at the Quay, and at night at Bridlington, we had large congregations, especially at night, when I was informed the chapel had not been so crowded for many years. All seemed very attentive, and some affected. May the Lord confirm the word of his grace."

Religion is, unquestionably, much indebted to Paley, for his very able work in proof of Christianity. It is true, he says little in it that had not, in one form or another, been said by others, and yet he justly occupies a place in the first rank of our original authors. It is to be lamented, that a man so justly celebrated on many accounts, should have argued against the utility of subscribing the Articles of our holy religion, or thrown out a hint capable of lessening, in the estimation of any of his readers, the obligation of keeping holy the Christian sabbath. But those two particulars, on account of which we conceive him liable to censure, do not affect the general merit of his productions. As an author, he was highly esteemed by Mr. Benson. "I have," he observes, under date December 13, "finished reading Paley's Evidences a second time, and I still think his arguments unanswerable. O that I could lay to heart more than ever the important truths and precious promises of that religion which is built on so solid a foundation!"

The 19th of December, being the day appointed by Government for a General Thanksgiving to Almighty God, on account of three naval victories recently obtained, Mr. Benson preached in the morning at Hull, on Psalm l. 14, 15, and in the evening on Psalm xlv. 1, &c. "In the evening," he says, "we had almost a Sunday night's congregation. All the churches, also, were well attended, and the people seemed very devout. But to the very great disgrace of this and many other places, the play-houses were opened in the evening.—I heard Mr. Dikes in the forenoon preach a very useful sermon, from Psalm ii. 11: 'Rejoice with trembling.' He showed, at large, what reasons we had to tremble; the contest not being yet over, and we being a sinful people."

On the evening of December 19, Mr. Benson, after having preached, met several classes, and amongst the rest, gave tickets to no less than twenty-eight soldiers and their wives. Many of them spoke clearly and feelingly of a work of grace upon their souls, and some of them had been steady in the ways of religion for many years. What they said

upon the occasion was apparently both pleasing and profitable to all present.

In the forenoon of December 31, Mr. Benson heard a sermon preached at the New Church, on "The righteous shall go into life eternal." In the afternoon, he held a Love-feast, at which many spoke of their experience in the things of God with much freedom, and to the edification of all who were present. At six he preached to a large congregation, on 1 Kings xviii. 21.

January 1, 1798. "I thank God," says Mr. Benson, "I have been very comfortable in my mind to-day, and have been enabled to devote myself afresh to God, especially at the meeting which we kept at night, for renewing our covenant with God. I believe, many found it a very awful, and yet refreshing season. O that I may be enabled to devote myself to God afresh every day, and to walk more closely with him than ever I have done! and O that he would more than ever bless my labours!"

The readiness with which the Methodists come forward, upon every occasion, in support of that excellent Government under which they enjoy civil and religious liberty in perfection, is highly to their credit. When, in the year 1798, Government expressed a willingness to accept of voluntary subscriptions, in aid of the defence of the country, then threatened with an invasion, the principal members of the Methodist Society at Hull, with a promptitude and liberality worthy of imitation, manifested their loyalty to their King, and love to their country, by the largeness of their subscriptions. This appears from what Mr. Benson says, under date the 22d of February.—"Subscriptions being set on foot in all parts of the kingdom, for the defence of the nation, at this critical time, when we are threatened with an invasion from the French, many of our principal friends met this afternoon in the vestry, to consider of the propriety of entering into a subscription among ourselves, and to open a book for the purpose. After a little conversation, we concluded that it would be very proper, and upwards of £835 were subscribed immediately! After preaching, I mentioned the business to the congregation, and I doubt not that many more will subscribe."

February 25, Mr. Benson expresses himself thus:—"Stopping in town, on account of the subscription for the defence of the nation, and to make a selection of hymns proper for the approaching Fast, I preached this morning on the 1st Psalm, and in the evening, on Gal. vi. 15. I thank God, I was much assisted, particularly in the evening; and, I trust, the word was made a blessing to many. My own mind has been kept in great peace, and has also been comforted to-day, especially during service at the church in the forenoon."

Being at York, to attend the District Meeting, on the 22d of May, at the request of the Preachers then assembled, Mr. Benson preached on

Matt. xx. 6. His congregation was large, and so much divine power accompanied his discourse, that several, by its instrumentality, were roused from the lethargy of sin, to a thorough sense of their guilt and danger ; and so speedily, as well as powerfully, did God work upon the occasion, that some of them, at a meeting held after the congregation was dismissed, obtained an assurance of justification by faith in the atonement of Christ. Nor need we be surprised at this, when we consider, that a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years, with the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, to whom all things are equally possible.

On the evening of May 28, Mr. Benson complains that he did not experience much freedom in preaching. This defect he attributes to his having chosen, whilst in the pulpit, a text different from that which he had previously chosen. After mentioning this circumstance, he says, " May I learn experience by this, and be wiser for the future !"

From that striking passage, Acts i. 8, Mr. Benson preached on the 31st of May. " I endeavoured," says he, " to show, 1. In what sense we are call to be witnesses for God ; 2. The necessity of our receiving power for that purpose ; 3. What reason we have to expect that power."

An additional Preacher having been wanted for the York Circuit, Mr. Benson and several others spent some time, in the morning of June 1, in earnest and solemn prayer to God, for a young man, Mr. Edward Hare, who was going to labour in that part of the Connexion. " We found," Mr. Benson says, " the Lord remarkably present with us, and our souls were greatly humbled and refreshed with his loving-kindness."

Mr. Edward Hare, whom Mr. Benson cursorily mentions, travelled twenty years in the Methodist Connexion, with an unblemished character. His mind was formed upon a superior scale ; and he was indefatigable in cultivating it to the best advantage. He was assiduous in promoting the interests of pure religion ; and from the press, as well as from the pulpit, he ably inculcated the doctrines of Christianity. As a Preacher, he was eminent ; and as a writer, very respectable.

Having, on June 8, mentioned that he preached and met classes at a country place in his Circuit, Mr. Benson says, " We seem rather to lose than gain ground at that place, which gave me so much concern, that I slept little all night."

It would answer no valuable purpose to attempt to conceal the melancholy truth, that some Ministers of our orthodox and venerable Church are far from being sufficiently well instructed in her doctrines. With one of this description Mr. Benson had, about this time, an opportunity of conversing, at North Cave. He observes, " After dining in company with a young clergyman, we entered into a conversation, or debate rather, on the nature of the Gospel and true Christianity. I found him utterly ignorant of the whole matter, and, therefore, spent at least, two

hours in endeavouring to give him light on the subject ; but, I fear, to little purpose."

Surely no man, in opposing any of the essential doctrines of Christianity, cuts a more awkward figure than a Church Minister, as all those doctrines are embodied, and that in language the most explicit, in the incomparable Formularies of that Church to which he belongs.

About the 18th of June, when the late Irish rebellion was raging, Mr. Benson received a letter from the Rev. Adam Averell, containing some account of the cruelty of the rebels. "Among other things," says Mr. Benson, "he observes that the rebels, wherever they came, had 'exhibited specimens of their cruelty,' burning whole families in their houses and taking children, who were striving to escape, on their pikes, and casting them into the flames ; that even their women no longer seemed to have the feelings of humanity ; a thirst for blood extinguishing in them all the tender affections of nature, with the timidity peculiar to their sex ; so that they not only prompted others to these cruelties, but were themselves agents in the business ; that every place was threatened, and that such was the general alarm, that none in the country dared to confide in his most intimate neighbour or hitherto faithful domestic, that was a papist ; believing the whole sect united in the plot of rebellion and murder."

To the prevalence of Popery in Ireland may be traced the barbarism, outrages, and cruelty so prevalent in several parts of that devoted country. The peculiarities of Popery are inimical to mental improvement, and equally opposed to civil and religious liberty.

On the evening of June 24, Mr. Benson addressed a large congregation ; and in doing this he was so powerfully assisted, that the truths delivered by him reached the hearts of many. "My mind," he remarks, "was peculiarly enlarged, and my mouth opened to address them with energy and manifest effect, very many having been much affected under the word. Afterwards a prayer-meeting was held, in which there was more disorder than I could have wished, several persons appearing to be in distress, and many praying with them and talking to them at the same time. I went and spoke to each, and endeavoured to compose their minds, and direct them into the way of salvation by faith in Jesus. I left some of them in apparent peace. Among the rest, a Lieutenant of the navy, on half pay, who had been lately wounded in an engagement, was affected under the word, and in great distress. Some of our friends continued to pray with him and a few others, till eleven o'clock."

Having read part of Belsham's Answer to Mr. Wilberforce, Mr. Benson, on the 30th of June, makes the following observations. "Belsham is a writer of the Unitarian tribe, who comes as low as Priestly himself, and makes Jesus Christ a mere teacher of morals and of a future state

He will not allow that he intercedes for us in heaven, or that there is need of any such thing, or that he is exalted to any power or authority over the creation, visible or invisible. A more shameless, blasphemous writer, professing Christianity, I have never read."

Surely they possess no ordinary share of ignorance and effrontery, who assert that in this Christian country the press is not sufficiently free, when such writers as Belsham may with impunity, disseminate their blasphemous productions.

After having preached at Nottingham, Worcester, and Birmingham, Mr. Benson arrived at Bristol, on the 24th of July, where the Conference was held that year. The four following days he was fully engaged as a member of the Stationing Committee. "We have cause," he remarks, "to be thankful that we have got through our work very well, and I hope have made a pretty complete plan."

Instead of being elated by his appointment to preside at this Conference, a consideration of the important duties attached to that office, depressed his spirits. This we learn from what he says upon the subject, under date July the 30th. "Having slept very little last night, chiefly through anxiety of mind, I have been poorly to-day, and have found myself very unfit indeed, for the office to which my brethren have appointed me, viz. that of *President of the Conference*. This will greatly increase my labour this Conference, and allow me little or no spare time; but I hope the Lord will fit and strengthen me for the work."

From the Address of the English to the Irish Conference, this year, we transcribe the following paragraph.

"We join issue with you in blessing God for the mild and peaceful Government under which we live. This calls forth our gratitude to God, and our Rulers, and fills us with a determined ardour, to do all in our power to suppress whatever tends to molest the best of Kings, or derange, in any degree, the happiest of civil constitutions! We never forget that, to lead 'quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty,' we must pray for 'KINGS, and for ALL THAT ARE IN AUTHORITY.' To this our Governors are no strangers, and therefore allow us such indulgences, as no body of people like us ever enjoyed before, in such times of peril and confusion!"

Were the Methodists a meddling political people, inimical to that Church, from which they were a colony, they would be a dangerous people: but they are at the utmost distance from being such; for the duties of loyalty to the King, and obedience to the laws, are so expressly and strongly insisted upon in the Rules, which may be considered as forming the constitution of the Methodists, that their loyalty, as a people, seems essential to their existence as a religious community.

On the 5th of August, Mr. Benson, having to preach in the evening at the New Chapel, in his official capacity, employed two hours in the

afternoon, in preparing for the occasion. The chapel was amazingly crowded; there not being fewer, it is thought, than three thousand individuals present. Mr. Benson says, "I was much assisted in explaining and applying Ezek. xxxiii. 7—9. Both Preachers and people were very attentive, and seemed much affected." He then mentions, that an anthem, not suited to the occasion, sung after the sermon, took off from the minds of the congregation much of the seriousness and solemnity manifested by them previous to its commencement. "However," says he, "we had a solemn season in admitting the Preachers."

It is well known that sometimes pious, wise, and prudent men become bankrupts, through circumstances over which they have no control; but too many, even among professors, become such by an avidity of gain, as well as by the want of diligence in business, and economy in expenditure. Under date August 19, a case of this sort is mentioned by Mr. Benson.—"I went and preached at Hull-bridge and Beverley, where I found the society had received a considerable shock by the failure of —, who had once failed before, but had lately got a person from the North, Mr. —, to join him in business, and to advance to the amount of —; so that he had begun a very great trade in shoemaking and other things. But his career was soon over; as it is only about half a year since he and his partner launched out this way. I am sorry for the good man that has suffered so much by him, as also for the cause of God which is thus wounded."

That benevolence which flows from divine love, and which extends to every subject of humanity, Mr. Benson manifested by the interest he took in the welfare of his servant-maid, while labouring under bodily affliction and mental depression. Under date August 29, he mentions her case, adding, "I have found my heart much engaged with God for her recovery, especially as she is at a considerable distance from her relations." On the 30th of August, he says again, "I thank God, our girl is now likely to recover. The means made use of have been blessed, or, God has checked the malady by his own power. She told us to-day, that for some weeks she had suffered loss in her soul, and had become lukewarm and careless; but that since she had been afflicted, she had been greatly distressed till yesterday, when the Lord again manifested his love to her, and gave her peace in believing, at the time when she was worst of all."

The attention with which Mr. Benson heard the word preached, whenever he had an opportunity of doing so, will appear from the following account, given by him of a sermon delivered by Mr. Dikes, at Hull, in the New Church on the 30th of September. The text was, "Ye are come to an innumerable company of angels." He showed, says Mr. Benson, "1. Why we are said to come to them, viz. for our comfort and

encouragement ; and that though we live in a world where the generality are gone out of the way, yet there are millions of spiritual beings, who retain their integrity, and are firm on the side of piety and virtue : 2. In what sense we are come to them ; as friends ; as ministering servants ; as models for our imitation ; as associates and companions. He then applied and improved the subject. It was an instructive and striking sermon ; and I trust was attended with a blessing."

Mr. Benson received with the warmest emotions of gratitude, every account of the success of the British army or navy. On the 3d of October, he says, " This morning, intelligence arrived at Hull, of the great victory obtained by Admiral Nelson, over the French fleet, at the mouth of the Nile, before Alexandria. The number of ships of the line, was, it seems, equal on both sides, but none of ours carried more than 74 guns, whereas one of the French ships had 120, and another 80. They also exceeded much in number of men, and had many gun-boats, and batteries upon the shore. Nevertheless, our fleet took nine of their ships, burnt three, and sunk one ; and only two out of fifteen escaped. Their Admiral's ship of 120 guns, and one thousand men, blew up, the Admiral being first killed. Our fleet also, it appears, have taken or destroyed many transports which had landed Bonaparte and his army in Egypt. Five thousand of the French were killed or wounded, and about as many taken prisoners. Thus hath God humbled their pride, and brought down their boasting."

The following is an exact copy of a letter written by Mr. Benson, and which has been obligingly communicated to us by Mr. William Dawson, one of the most useful, as well as legitimately popular of all the local preachers in the Methodist Connexion. In transmitting it, Mr. Dawson in a note, bearing date May 25, 1822, says : " In conformity to your wishes, I have sent you a copy of the letter which Mr. Benson wrote to me in answer to the question, ' Whether it was his opinion I should be more useful in the Church than amongst the Methodists ? ' If you think it will shed a ray round the head of Mr. Benson, though smaller than the finest hair, you are welcome to make that use of it which your judgment thinks proper ; though, in my humble opinion, the brilliance of Mr. Benson's excellencies, can receive but little, if any addition, from the publication of our correspondence."

" TO MR. WILLIAM DAWSON.

" York, October 30, 1798.

" Dear Sir,

" Having been very much engaged ever since I was favoured with your letter, it has not been in my power to pay proper attention to it till now. And even now, having only half an hour to spare here upon a

journey I am taking into the North, I shall not be able to return you such an answer as you will probably expect. But if I can suggest any hint which may cast light upon your path, I shall be glad.

“Let me observe, 1st, It is a matter of very great thankfulness that so many pious Ministers have got into the Church in different parts of the kingdom of late years, and it is much to be desired that more still should be introduced into it; for, as you justly observe, ‘thousands will hear the Gospel in the Church who will not hear it out of it.’ Add to this, we are at no loss at all to procure Preachers to labour in our Connexion; we have more who offer every year than we can take in; but it is not so easy to find persons proper to go into the Church, or to get such as are proper so educated as that they can be admitted.

“Nevertheless, though I speak thus, I would observe, 2dly, It is not in me to determine how far it *will* be your duty to endeavour to get into the Church. Divers circumstances should be taken into consideration; as your inclination and ability to apply yourself to the study of the classics; how far you can be spared from the calls of your father’s family, who, it seems, are partly dependent upon you for support. The loss of five years, which if you went to the University would be absolutely necessary to qualify you for Orders, is a serious objection, which I could not get over, were it not for the prospect of greater usefulness afterwards; and yet this is doubtful, should it please God to spare your life.

“Upon the whole, the best advice I can give you is, to remember him who has said, ‘Acknowledge me in all thy ways, and I will direct thy steps.’

“If your eye be single to God’s glory, and you sincerely, earnestly, and believingly ask his direction, you certainly shall be favoured with it, and not suffered to take a wrong step.

“Praying that the Lord may make darkness light before you in the business, and guide you continually,

“I remain your sincere friend and brother,

“JOSEPH BENSON.”

Throughout the whole of this letter, which was evidently written in haste, Mr. Benson’s eminent piety, good sense, prudence, and catholic spirit, are manifest.

Having engaged to visit the circuits in Cumberland and the county of Durham, accompanied by his pious and intelligent friend, the late Mr. Michael Longridge, he proceeded by York, Darlington, and Durham, addressing large and attentive congregations, both in the evenings and mornings, to Mr. Longridge’s house, near Sunderland. At seven in the evening of November 2d, he preached at that town to a very crowded congregation. “And although,” he says, “I was unwell, hav-

ing slept none at all last night, yet, I thank God, many seemed much affected." On the 3d of November, he preached at Monkwearmouth, and on the following day, in the morning at Sunderland, from "Take heed how ye hear." At six in the evening, such crowds came to hear, that many hundreds, for want of space in the chapel to admit them, were denied that pleasure. "The Lord," says he, "assisted me much, and I trust many felt the word quick and powerful, while I enlarged on 'God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.'" After preaching at half past one, on his way to Newcastle, he found a crowded congregation expecting him there, on the evening of the 6th of November. "I explained," says he, "and applied Matt. xx. 6, with much liberty and power, and the people in general were greatly affected. May the Lord make my visit here a means of reviving his declining cause in this populous town!"

At Alnwick he addressed a large congregation in the evening of the following day; but did not find "so much liberty in speaking as at Newcastle, nor did the word appear to produce so much effect."

At Newcastle, in the morning of November 11, at nine o'clock, Mr. Benson was surprised to see the Orphan-house quite crowded. He had intended to preach upon another subject; but, having reason to believe that many backsliders were present, he changed his purpose, and discoursed on Peter's fall and repentance. Towards the conclusion, the whole of the congregation, with few exceptions, were much impressed; this they manifested by the tears which they shed in abundance.

Accompanied by his excellent friends, Mr. and Mrs. Smith, Mr. Benson went to the Fell to preach at two o'clock. On coming there, he found that there would not be room in the chapel for one-third of the people assembled. On this account, he was obliged to preach out of doors, which, as the day was mild, he did without much inconvenience to himself or the people. His text was that delightful passage in Luke xv. 7, "Likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth," &c. The people wept so abundantly, that Mr. Smith said "the ground seemed to be watered with their tears." "I have no doubt," Mr. Benson observes, "that many will long remember the gracious season." In the evening at Newcastle, the Orphan-house was crowded at least half an hour before the time, and hence many were afterwards obliged to go away. A collection was made for the Sunday-school. Late in the forenoon of November 12, he preached at Burnop-fields, on Heb. iv. 1. "It was," he remarks, "a precious time, and many were affected under the word." In the afternoon, he returned to Newcastle, where, to a crowded congregation, he explained and applied, "Woe to the world because of offences," &c.

Leaving Newcastle early in the afternoon of November 13, he preached at Byken to a large audience on Rom. xiv. 17. "The Lord," he

says, "was with us, and many tears were shed on the occasion." Immediately after preaching, attended by his friend Mr. Smith, he hastened to North Shields, where at seven in the evening he earnestly exhorted a large congregation to "Strive to enter in at the straight gate." In the forenoon of the following day, he crossed the Tyne, with some friends, in a small boat, and devoted the afternoon, chiefly to writing and preparing to preach at South Shields in the evening. The chapel was thoroughly filled, and he was enabled to show with clearness, in what respects our righteousness must exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, in order to our entering the kingdom of heaven.

Under date November 16, Mr. Benson writes thus :—"In crossing the water in company with Mr. Johnson, I took a particular view of that curiosity, the iron bridge, thrown over the Wear; an astonishing and expensive, but, at the same time, a most commodious work. At noon, we dined with Mr. Hampson, the Rector, with whom we had some profitable conversation."

Mr. Benson, on the 20th of November, after taking leave of his warm-hearted friends at Sunderland, says, "I left the kind family where I lodged, and set out for Newbottle, where I preached to as many people as could crowd into the little chapel. The Lord gave me great enlargement of mind, in discoursing on Luke xi. 13. It was, indeed, a most precious season. My own soul was much refreshed, and so I believe, were the souls of most or all present."

At Durham, in the evening, he preached at a Dissenting chapel, it being considerably larger than that which then belonged to the Methodists in that city. On the forenoon of November 21, accompanied by his sister and her husband, he proceeded to Bishop Auckland, where his nephew resided, and where he preached with considerable liberty and good effect to a small congregation. Here he had the happiness of meeting his cousin, Joshua Watson, of whom mention is made in the early part of this Memoir.

Having taken leave of his brother and sister at Bishop Auckland, he proceeded to Barnard Castle, where he was most affectionately received by Mr. Nicholson, a distant relation; who came from Melmerby, in Cumberland, the place of Mr Benson's nativity. "The Lord," says Mr. Benson, "had enlightened his mind, and brought him to the knowledge of the truth, some years after I left that country; and since then, he has been an exemplary and useful member of society."

In the evening, Mr. Benson preached with much liberty to a crowded congregation. Many evidently felt the power of the word. The Church Minister was present. "He heard," says Mr. Benson, "very attentively. Probably I brought strange things to his ears; but, I believe, he was not offended, as he took an affectionate leave of me."

On the morning of November 22, Mr. Benson preached once more at Barnard Castle, on 2 Pet. i. 10, 11. Many of the old Methodists wept while he spoke on the subject of vital and experimental religion, and urged them to transmit it pure and undefiled to such as should come after them.

When men of the world, who ought to know that even natural joy, when raised to a certain pitch, "has its tears," and much more spiritual joy, hear that religious persons, not influenced by the sorrow of the world, occasionally weep, they are apt to attribute their doing so to gloom and melancholy. But in this they are egregiously mistaken; for that divine joy with which strangers to God are wholly unacquainted, frequently, when at a certain height, manifests itself by tears. He was a philosopher, as well as a Christian and a poet, who said,

"Tears of joy mine eyes o'erflow,
That I have any hope of heaven;
Much of love I ought to know,
For I have much forgiven."

In consequence of not being able to procure places for himself and niece, who travelled with him, at the time he intended, he did not arrive at York till near one o'clock, in the morning of November 23. But though he expected that none of his friends in that city would be up at that hour to receive him, he soon found that his excellent friend, Mr. Spence, had sent a young man to conduct him to his house. After spending the forenoon comfortably at York, he took coach about two o'clock, and arrived at Hull about nine at night. "I had," says he, "the comfort of finding my family well, and we praised God for all his mercies."

Mr. Benson who was a Protestant patriot of the old school, and consequently, opposed to Popery and arbitrary power on the one hand, and licentiousness on the other, rejoiced to record every triumph of the British forces, whether by sea or land. Days set apart by Government, as times of humiliation or thanksgiving, were by him sacredly observed. Of the 29th of November, he says, "This being a day appointed for a General Thanksgiving, for our late victories over the French, by sea, viz. off the Nile, and near the north-west coast of Ireland, we had a meeting for prayer in the morning, when the Lord was graciously with us. In the forenoon I attended church, and heard an excellent sermon; and, in the evening, I preached with a measure of liberty at our chapel, to a large congregation, on Deut. xxxiii. 26."

At Hull, on Christmas-Day, which always was to him a day of great labour, he preached in the morning, and attended church in the forenoon; in the afternoon, he met classes, and preached in the evening. Speaking of the classes, he says, "I have now met the whole of them,

and have reason to conclude, that the Society is in a prosperous state. I never knew them meet better than they have done this quarter."

On January 1, 1799, Mr. Benson says, "I spent some time in the morning in meditation and prayer, and endeavoured to devote myself afresh to him who has mercifully preserved me and mine through the changes and chances of the past year, and to the beginning of this. At six in the evening, I preached on Gen. xxviii. 30, with a measure of freedom; and afterwards Mr. Lomas and I kept a meeting for the renewing of our covenant with God. I believe it was a precious season to many."

Whilst persons truly devoted to God are always disposed, with joy, to express their gratitude to him for blessings received, but more especially for such of them as are of a spiritual nature, they never fail to have humbling views of themselves. Their joyful and self-abasing reflections are so many results of divine influence. In proof of the justness of these observations, we quote what Mr. Benson says, under date January 22.—"I thank the Lord, my mind has been particularly comfortable to-day; and I have had serious, sweet, and profitable reflections whilst riding, on the truth, nature, and importance of the religion of Jesus, as well as on the person and glory of the Son of God. I see I have not followed a cunningly-devised fable; and that, in spending my life in continual endeavours to spread the Gospel, I have been engaged in the most important work in the world. I bless the Lord, too, that I have not run in vain, nor laboured in vain! But I am persuaded, I should have had much more success, if I had lived nearer to God, been more in prayer, and had more of the divine presence accompanied the word I have been enabled to speak."

The 27th of February being a day appointed by Government for a General Fast, Mr. Benson was careful, on the preceding day, to prepare a discourse suited to the solemnity. At half past seven, and at one o'clock, he kept a meeting for prayer; at both the one and the other of which, the Lord was graciously present. In the forenoon, he attended divine service at church, where he heard an excellent sermon, and well suited to the occasion, on Jer. viii. 7. "The church," says Mr. Benson, "was well filled, and the people very attentive. In the evening, I addressed a crowded congregation at our chapel, on 2 Pet. iii. 15. The Lord gave me both matter and language, and, I trust, many felt the power of the word. O that the effect may be lasting!"

Notwithstanding Mr. Benson's eminent holiness, naturally strong and well-cultivated mind, we find him occasionally mentioning his inward and outward trials. The holiest and best of men, during the time of their warfare upon earth, cannot fail to experience so much natural evil every day as may be sufficient to remind them, however agreeably situated in life, that this world is not the land of their rest, but that of

their pilgrimage. They occasionally groan, being burdened; and look out, with eager expectation, for the approach of the happy period when they shall rest from their labours. Meantime, however exquisitely sensible they may be of what they endure, they are ever, even at the lowest ebb of their comfort, desirous to

..... "Vindicate eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to man."

The truth of these observations Mr. Benson proved on the 17th and 18th of March. On the 17th, he says, "Having been kept awake almost all last night, I have been very low and poorly in body to-day. However, I have endeavoured to go through my work of preaching and meeting classes, but with little satisfaction to myself. Alas! what a poor weak creature I am! How easily unfitted for any service to God or my fellow creatures! My faith and patience have been much exercised of late, by my wife's indisposition; Miss Burnel, also, and our servant, have been much afflicted. May all these trying dispensations be sanctified to us!"

Trying dispensations he found them to be, but divine; and, acknowledging God in all his ways, he prayed that they might be sanctified to himself and his family.

Some who do not duly consider, that whatever may be the talents, piety, and zeal of a Minister of Christ, divine influence and men's concurrence with it are necessary to the success of his labours, may be led to wonder that the work of God did not flourish wherever Mr. Benson was in the habit of preaching. But we know it did not; for, in several parts of his Journal, he informs us, that, in some places, he, to all appearance, laboured in vain, and spent his strength to little or no valuable purpose. Nay, that in some neighbourhoods, few could be prevailed upon to listen to his discourses. Under date April 26, he himself gives us some information upon this subject.

"Yesterday and to-day I spent chiefly at Elloughton and Welton, in reading, writing, and visiting the sick. My mind has been kept in peace, and I have enjoyed nearness to God. I have been grieved, nevertheless, to see the work of God so much at a stand in these places; the word of God, to all appearance, being preached almost, if not altogether, in vain. Last night, at Welton, we had a good many hearers, but, in general, I fear, very unconcerned. To-night, at Hyle, we had, as usual, very few."

Having so arranged matters that he could, with propriety, visit his numerous friends at Sheffield and a few other places, Mr. Benson set out on the 15th of May for Thorne and Doncaster. At Thorne he preached early in the afternoon. "At seven," he says, "we had a pretty large congregation at Doncaster, and many were much affected

while I applied Matt. xx. 6: 'Why stand ye all the day idle?' " On the forenoon of the following day, he proceeded to Sheffield. In the evening, he addressed, on the Parable of the Sower, a large and attentive congregation.

It is when persons truly pious are greatly afflicted, that they most conspicuously manifest the force of that blessed religion they possess. Men, in the enjoyment of bodily health, and in easy circumstances, may, without religion, if wholly unawakened, verge toward the happiness enjoyed by irrational animals; but let them be chastened with strong pain, or reduced to necessitous circumstances, and, not having divine consolation, they will be emphatically wretched. How different from such was the pious female visited by Mr. Benson, on the 18th of May!

"In the forenoon I called to see that eminently good, but much afflicted woman, Mrs. Green. I found her, though under a long, tedious, and distressing affliction, possessed of great peace of mind, sweetly resigned to the will of God, and rejoicing in hope of his glory, although not without many assaults from the powers of darkness. She requested me to urge the people every where, to read the word of God, and make themselves well acquainted with it; signifying that the blessed truths, and promises of it were her chief support in this time of trial."

Having preached at Thorpe-Herly, on May 18, to a pretty large congregation, Mr. Benson returned to Sheffield; and, on the following day he preached twice at Norfolk-Street, and once at Garden-Street, where he made a collection for the Benevolent Society.—On the evening of May 20, Mr. Benson's whole congregation was much affected while he explained and applied Luke xxii. 61. "I hope," says he, "many will long remember this precious season."

Mr. Benson, having preached at Whitely Wood, Barnesley, and Wakefield, in all which places, the truths delivered by him found their way to the understanding and hearts of many whom he addressed, arrived at Leeds in the forenoon of the 25th of May. At seven o'clock in the morning of the next day, he was astonished to find the chapel quite crowded; so desirous were the people to hear once more a man who had been so often to them an interpreter, one among a thousand. At two o'clock, he preached at Hunslet to as many as could possibly crowd into the chapel. After returning to Leeds, in the evening, he found the chapel so full, that it was with difficulty he made his way into the pulpit. Many hundreds came afterwards, who could not gain admission. "I never," says Mr. Benson, "preached to so many people at Leeds before, and, I think, never with greater freedom and enlargement of mind, or more strongly. Many wept much, and I trust, will not soon forget the gracious season."

Having preached at Tadcaster, on his way to York, on the 27th of May, he rode afterwards to that city the same evening; and, notwith-

standing the fatigue consequent on his having preached so often, and travelled so much, he opened the District Meeting at six o'clock the next morning, and preaching in the evening.

At this District Meeting, in which Mr. Benson presided with his wonted wisdom and discretion, some regulations were proposed, which, if properly attended to, would, through the divine blessing, be productive of beneficial results. Mr. Benson's account of them runs thus:—

“We were of opinion,—1. That it would be adviseable, occasionally, to meet the servants apart, and also the married and single persons in our Societies. 2. That we ought to insist more than we do, on relative duties. 3. That evil-speaking is a prevailing sin in our Societies, and that to check it, the Sermon on Evil-speaking should be read to, or circulated in the Societies, as the Minutes direct. 4. That, to increase the gifts of the Local Preachers, it would be well for the Travelling Preachers to hear them frequently, with all possible attention, and afterwards mention to them what they might judge erroneous in doctrine, or improper in language, pronunciation, or manner. 5. That our people should be cautioned against unscriptural expressions, when speaking of their experience, as that of *full salvation*, when they only mean *perfect love*; and against speaking as though a man might be justified, and not *at all* sanctified. 6. That many of those who exercise in prayer-meetings are blameable in exhorting persons to believe, without explaining to them the nature of faith, or showing them *what* or *how* they are to believe.”

Arriving at Hull on the 30th of May, where his gratitude was excited on finding his family so well, he immediately entered upon his regular work, by preaching at seven in the evening.

In the morning of June 2, Mr. Benson informs us, that at Hull he explained and applied, with a measure of liberty, Rom. viii. 2—5; and, in the evening, Jer. iii. 19. In the evening, the congregation was very large and attentive. At church, in the forenoon, he was edified and comforted by a sermon, delivered by Mr. Stillingfleet, on Heb. xi. 24—26.

“He showed,” says Mr. Benson, “1. That young persons, as soon as they are come to years, so as to be capable of it, ought to exercise the faculties imparted to them, in choosing the objects they intend to pursue in after life. 2. The things offered to their choice: (1.) On the one hand, riches, honours, pleasures; and (2.) on the other, salvation, with reproach and affliction. 3. That all God's people make the choice that Moses made. 4. The means whereby, and the ground on which, they make it. By faith, and on this ground, (1.) the pleasures of sin are but for a season; and, (2.) they have respect to the recompence of reward.”

Upon the supposition, that *all* the truly pious, as such, were shut out from riches and honours, and otherwise exposed to persecution, all the

parts of Mr. Stillingfleet's sermon would be defensible ; but in this, and at least one other Protestant country, where civil and religious liberty are universally prevalent, men however holy, may become rich and honourable; and not to be called to endure any affliction, nor, strictly speaking, reproach, on account of their piety. As righteousness exalts a nation, so it does individuals; and in whatever country equal laws for all the subjects are enacted, and impartially executed, as in England, men may be patterns of universal holiness, and, at the same time, *rich and honourable*. Meantime, it is proper to observe, that this slight animadversion on a part of Mr. Stillingfleet's sermon, is not meant to detract from its general worth.

Often did Mr. Benson, on finding that by the immorality of professors, a stumbling block was thrown in the way of such as would, possibly, otherwise have entered into the fold of Christ, preach, in various places, on "Woe to the world, because of offences !" It seems that he might, with propriety, have taken that passage for the subject of a discourse at Beverley, on the 16th of June, when he wrote as follows :—“Owing to the offences that are continually given in this place by one or another, we gain no ground ; nay, have fewer, by ten or twelve in the Society, than we had last year.”

To those who, through the want of divine illumination, know nothing of what is meant by contending “with principalities and powers, and wicked spirits in high places,” but are passing through life as securely as if all their joys and sorrows were to terminate at death, the following extract from Mr. Benson's Journal will appear almost as inexplicable as that in the Epistle to the Hebrews, which informs us, that our blessed Saviour “offered up his prayers with strong cries and tears.”

“June 19.—I have been low in my mind, and exercised with various temptations, that have harassed me occasionally for years. O that the Lord would interpose, and deliver me ; or, at least, make his grace sufficient for me, that I may not be tempted above that I am able to bear !” Having thus expressed himself, he adds, “I preached at Elloughton with liberty and satisfaction, in the evening, and the word, I believe, was blessed to many.” But the comfort here expressed was only transient, as will appear from what he immediately adds,—“In meeting the classes afterwards, I found my mind much exercised with the misconduct of some, and the rash and bitter zeal of others, who seem as if they would tear the little Society to pieces, and quite destroy the work of God in the village. I was obliged to exclude two, and I endeavoured to soften the rest as well as I could.”

There is a sober, because a scriptural, sense in which all, who are truly devoted to God, may be said to pray always ; but there are times in which they are enabled to pray, with a more than ordinary degree of

earnestness, and with much more effect than usual. With one of those times Mr. Benson was favoured on the 20th of June. He observes ;

“ I was much edified and refreshed this morning, in reading Mrs. Johnson’s (of Bristol) Life, just published ; and my soul was drawn after God in prayer, for a clearer knowledge of, and deeper communion with him, that I may be more holy and useful than I have ever been, the few remaining years I may yet have to live. O how my soul longed for this ! and I thank God, not without hope, that I should have my desire accomplished. I was also led to pray, that the Lord would be with my wife in the approaching time of her trial, and make her the living and joyful mother of another living and perfect child. My heart was also much engaged with God for direction, with respect to the line of life in which we should bring up our second son, now sixteen years of age, and having some inclination for the ministry of the Gospel. O that the Lord would direct, and not suffer us to take a wrong step, in a matter of such importance ! ”

Without holiness, good sense, and zeal, no man is qualified for entering into the ministry ; but, in addition to these, there are other requisites, such as a competent knowledge of divinity, and ability to speak with tolerable correctness, without which, except in cases of great necessity, none ought to occupy the pulpit. The English language is so easy and simple in its construction, that a competent grammatical knowledge of it may be attained, with a little assistance, by grown-up persons of sense whose mother tongue it is, in the course of a few weeks. For want of this easy-to-be-attained and highly useful qualification, some Preachers of piety and native good sense have their usefulness much impeded. No person, competent to judge upon the subject, would assert, that speaking correctly is injurious to the spirit of devotion. Who more devout than Mr. Benson, and yet, under date July 4, he wrote the following paragraph :—

“ Mr.—— coming unexpectedly to Hull, I asked him to preach, which I was afterwards sorry that I did, as he made most miserable work of it ; misinterpreting the Scripture, using improper words frequently, speaking ungrammatically, and being guilty of much tautology. Some Clergymen and others who had come to hear me, as I afterwards found, were much grieved and disappointed.”

As Mrs. Benson expected to be confined every day, Mr. Benson, who was one of the most attentive, as well as affectionate of husbands, could not reconcile it to his mind to leave her thus circumstanced, notwithstanding the earnest desire of all the Preachers assembled in Manchester, to see him in his place at the Conference. Under date July 25, he says, “ I have now little hope of attending the Conference. But I shall not be sorry for this, if things be but ordered for the best. I trust, at

least, my lack of service will be supplied, and that they will be as well ordered as if I had been present. And I expect, by staying at home, to have a little leisure for reading, writing, and retirement, and hope it will be of great and lasting use to my soul! God grant it for his mercy's sake!"

On the 29th of July, a letter, of which the following is a correct copy, was forwarded by post, from Manchester, to Mr. Benson:—

"Dear Sir,

"We are ordered by the Conference to return you their thanks, which they have voted unanimously, for your diligence and impartiality, in the execution of your office, as their President.

"Signed in behalf and by order of the Conference,

"SAMUEL BRADBURN, President.

"THOMAS COKE, Secretary."

In addition to this official letter, the President wrote thus: "Believe me, dear Sir, the whole body feel for your present distressing situation, and constantly pray for you and your dear wife; and we shall be glad to see you here as soon as possible.

"SAMUEL BRADBURN."

In the true spirit of that Christian humility, for which he was justly noted, Mr. Benson wrote, on July 31, the following answer to the letter of thanks which had been voted him by the Conference:—

"MR. BRADBURN,

"Dear Sir,—I have received the letter of thanks signed by you as President, and Dr. Coke as Secretary, in behalf of the Conference, and must beg of you to take the first convenient opportunity of signifying to them the deep sense I entertain of the respect they showed me, in choosing me President last year, and of my utter unworthiness, both of being put into that office, and of their thanks for the manner I discharged the duties of it, being conscious of my insufficiency for such a weighty task. I most sincerely love the brethren, and the Methodist Connexion in general, and have long endeavoured to serve both to the utmost of my power; but have always had to regret, as I have still, my great want of both grace and gifts for so high and holy a calling as that of serving God and his church. I am much obliged to the brethren for their prayers in behalf of my dear partner. I believe they are, in part, answered already; for, although she is not yet delivered, she seems much strengthened and encouraged within these few days, and, I hope, better prepared for the trial she has, for a week past, been expecting

every hour. I congratulate you on your appointment to the office of President this year, and doubt not you will discharge it, if not with better intentions, yet with greater ability, than

Your sincere friend,
but unworthy brother,

JOSEPH BENSON."

On the 4th of August, Mr. Benson's gratitude was excited, by having the prayers, which he had recently offered in behalf of the partner of his life, answered. The providential interposition he thus records. "I thank God, my dear wife was safely delivered of a fine boy this morning, about half past two o'clock. Thus has the Lord graciously heard and answered prayer. O that we may be enabled to thank him as he deserves!"

Under date August 20, Mr. Benson notices his having read a work written by Dr. Beattie, author of the celebrated Essay on Truth; a production which is admirably calculated to call the attention of speculative and enterprising young persons from metaphysical reveries and sceptical notions, to the first principles of just reasoning. His late Majesty, of pious and happy memory, whose mind, whatever some may say to the contrary, was formed upon a superior scale, and who was a very general reader, set so high an estimate on the work in question, that from the privy purse he settled upon its intelligent, learned, and amiable author a pension of £300 per annum. All true friends to learning and religion rejoice, that among the objects of his late Majesty's bounty can be numbered the celebrated Dr. Samuel Johnson, and, in one sense, the not less celebrated Dr. Beattie; for his Essay on Truth, independent of his other works, is sufficient to immortalize him as an author. But let us hear Mr. Benson's opinion of another of his performances.

"This morning I finished Beattie's Evidences of the Christian Religion, in two small volumes; an excellent little work, and well suited to the state of young persons, for whose instruction and establishment it was principally written. It would be well, indeed, if young people in general, of the more intelligent and better educated class, would read it carefully."

Were youth in general taught the science of true religion, which has God for its author, and is, consequently, founded in immutable truth and certainty, as they are taught Arithmetic,—*practically*, as well as *theoretically*; they would, with few exceptions, through all the future stages of their life, be as far from calling in question the truth of the former as that of the latter.

In many parts of Mr. Benson's papers, we find indubitable proofs that he knew well how to blend charity with orthodoxy, which always,

when united, operate to most advantage. In many points, and those of considerable importance, he differed from the Society of Friends, and yet, under date August 23, he gives the following account of a meeting held by some of them at Hull:—

“Upon application made by some of the Quakers here, we gave permission to a woman belonging to them, from America, to hold a meeting in our chapel, this evening, at six o’clock. The chapel, I find, was crowded with people; and after sitting silent about half an hour, first another woman spoke for about a quarter of an hour, and then she began; she continued speaking above an hour, to the satisfaction and, I hope, profit of the hearers.”

The injury done to religion, in many places, by idle gossiping professors, is incalculable. At a place called Welton, Mr. Benson, on the 12th of September, found some of those pests of both civil and religious society.

“Last night we had a pretty good congregation at Welton, and I was assisted in explaining and applying John iii. 5, 6. The people seemed, as, indeed, they generally do, to hear attentively. But still, we see very little fruit of our preaching there. To-day, I think, I have partly discovered the cause, viz. *tale-bearing* and *evil-speaking*, in some that are joined in Society. May the Lord remove this and every other hinderance, that we may not labour in vain.”

The following paragraph reminds us of the manner in which such blessed men, as Philip and Matthew Henry, were wont to record providential occurrences:—“October 1. This day we dedicated our youngest child, now eight weeks old, to the Lord, in baptism, and named him *Samuel*, not because he was *asked* of the Lord, but because the Lord has given him to us in our declining years, and has heard prayer, in wonderfully sparing, and preserving, and restoring my wife, when, to all appearance, she was not likely to survive the pain and peril of child-bearing. In gratitude, therefore, for his mercies, we give him to the Lord, and desire he may live to shew forth his praise.”

From the 1st to the 5th of October, Mr. Benson devoted some time daily to a perusal of Dr. Beattie’s work on Universal Grammar; that on the Attachments of Kindred; and his performance upon the Sublime. “I have,” says he, “in reading them, been both pleased and profited. He is a clear, judicious, and elegant writer, and casts light on every subject he takes in hand. In his work on ‘Attachments of Kindred,’ there are some excellent remarks on Polygamy, the unlawfulness of which he clearly evinces, and says he would have enlarged more upon it, had it not been treated in so masterly a manner by the Monthly Reviewers.”

It is highly gratifying to benevolent minds to hear authors speak, in terms of approbation, of the works of each other. Mr. Benson, who was himself an author, and, before this time, had written on the subject

of Polygamy, was not led, by partiality to his own works, to depreciate those of others. He delighted, through life, upon every proper occasion, to speak highly of such productions as he conceived calculated to promote the interests of science, morality, and religion.

On the 7th of October, Mr. Benson says, "This evening, the Rev. Mr. Collins preached a useful sermon, from John iv. 23. He made many instructive and encouraging observations on the true spiritual worship, and on its acceptableness to God. I hope many souls were profited by what he advanced."

To a gentleman who had a living in his gift, Dr. Priestley observed, that if his intention was to have the church filled, an enthusiast was fit for his purpose, and he mentioned the Rev. Mr. Collins, as one of that description. This is no matter of surprise when coming from a man who did all in his power to bring scriptural orthodoxy into contempt; but when we hear persons, who profess themselves members of the Established Church, censure, as enthusiasts, those Ministers who inculcate her doctrines, our astonishment is justly excited.

The pleasure and profit with which Mr. Benson read, on the 14th of October, a sermon written by Dr. Coke, prove that he was perfectly reconciled to that great and good man. He says, "In the morning, I read, with much pleasure and profit, the fourth of Dr. Coke's Sermons on the Duties of a Minister of the Gospel, viz. the sermon on the importance of giving themselves continually to prayer. I was much humbled under a consideration, that I had not given myself so much to it as I ought, and that this was one great reason why I had not been more useful, as well as more holy, and why the word had not been accompanied with more unction, and been more blessed to the people. I found my mind drawn out in strong desire to give myself more to it than ever, and by the grace of God, resolved so to do. I afterwards spent some time in sweet and comfortable prayer for myself and the success of my labours, for my wife and children, especially for God's blessing on my eldest son; and that I may be directed with regard to the employment to which I should bring up my second son, being afraid to dedicate him to the ministry, lest he should not be called of God to that important, but perilous, office. May the Lord direct me! He knows I would rather he were a Preacher of the Gospel than any thing else, if I thought God called him." In this passage we discover the self-accusing and humble Christian, the tender and affectionate husband, the loving father, and the able and judicious divine.

On the 25th of October, Mr. Benson observes, that he had been much profited by reading the Life of the Rev. Mr. Grimshaw, written by the Rev. John Newton. "He was, indeed," says Mr. Benson, "a most zealous, active, and laborious Minister of Christ, and wonderfully successful in his Master's work. O that I could begin to endeavour to

follow him as he followed Christ ! My mind has, indeed, been much refreshed by reading this publication. May the effect be lasting, and may I be more earnest and diligent than ever ; and may the Lord give his blessing to my endeavours."

On the 3d of November, Mr. Benson heard the Rev. Mr. Dikes, of Hull, preach an excellent sermon, from Gal. vi. 7 : " Be not deceived, God is not mocked," &c. The following is Mr. Benson's account of the discourse : " He spoke clearly and pointedly respecting our liability to be deceived, our proneness to act as if we thought God might be mocked, and that there is connection established in grace as well as in nature, so that whatsoever a man sows he must certainly reap. As to mocking God, he observed, that we are said to mock a person, 1st, When we act as though we thought we could cheat or deceive him ; and 2dly, When we disbelieve and disregard his declarations and words. Thus people mock God, when, 1st, They indulge themselves in sin and sinful pleasures, and yet think they shall escape the punishment God has annexed to sin ; and when, notwithstanding God's decree and determination, they hope, without holiness, and by a death-bed repentance, to see the Lord. And when, 2dly, They disbelieve and disregard his declarations respecting the necessity of conversion, a new birth, &c. in order to eternal life."

Let every Church Minister be such a man as Mr. Dikes, and all the churches and chapels belonging to the Establishment will be attended by such multitudes, that, in order to their accommodation, many more churches must be erected. But let men who maintain that there is no other than baptismal regeneration, and that all are *fanatics* or *enthusiasts* who profess to know that the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto them, occupy the pulpits of those churches and chapels, and there will be found no necessity for building more ; and in several of those already built, the Ministers will find themselves almost similarly circumstanced with Dean Swift, when his clerk made the whole of his congregation. Our church possesses many advantages peculiar to herself, especially the regular and learned education of the generality of her Ministers, together with their not being dependent on the people for their income, that being legally secured to them ; and hence, let her Ministers, in general, be only men of piety and zeal, and she will *increase* in the number of members, who would reflect credit upon any church or society, and have no danger to apprehend from the numerous sects, which in this, above all other countries, abound. She occupies a high and strong ground ; and, from her recent exertions in support of Christian Missionaries, manifests, that the principle of renovation inherent in her, and which has been for years in full operation, is capable, through the divine blessing, of more than counter-

acting the principle of deterioration, which exists in all civil and religious communities.

A man of sense, piety, and taste, needs only to read a few pages of M'Laurin's works to discover that he was no common man. His sermon on the subject of Glorifying in the Cross of Christ, is a masterpiece, nor are his other sermons and essays much inferior. This great man we were led to mention, by Mr. Benson's saying, "Both yesterday and to-day, I have been much edified in reading some of M'Laurin's sermons, viz. one on James i. 13, 14, respecting our sins not being chargeable upon God; and one on Glorifying in the Cross of Christ, from Gal. vi. 14. And I have found access to the Lord, with confidence in prayer, while waiting upon him in that duty."

On the 19th of November, Mr. Benson observes, "How true it is, that in the midst of life we are in death! This morning I narrowly escaped being killed, through a fall from my horse, when I was within a mile of home. He fell quite down, not only on his knees, but upon his face, and I went over his head, and, being entangled in the stirrup, he tumbled partly upon me. But, blessed be God, I was very little hurt. Surely, he gives his angels charge concerning us. O that we could trust in him more, and be always ready for our great change, since we never know when it will pass upon us!"

How true it is that every man walking in the spirit makes a good, practical use of every occurrence! Those who are divinely taught, and who, consequently, acknowledge God in all their ways, have all the dispensations of Providence, whether prosperous or adverse, sanctified to their profit. Every occurrence, which is to them of either a pleasing or painful nature, they receive as from the hands of Him who says, that the hairs of their head are numbered. How secure are they in the hands of the sovereign Ruler of the Universe, to whom all second causes are subject! With this blessed doctrine of providence, Mr. Benson was well acquainted; and hence, he owned the divine hand in all he was given to enjoy, or called to suffer.

About this time, he was visited with a severe domestic trial, which he bore with the resolution of a man, and the piety of a Christian. Various providences concurred to prevent his having to suffer the magnitude of the evil of which he was painfully apprehensive; nay, so to over-rule the dispensation, as to promote, eventually, his domestic happiness.

On the 5th of December, Mr. Benson, being at Liverpool, preached in the evening to a crowded congregation, at Pitt-Street Chapel, and on the next evening at Edmund-Street. "I was," says he, "favoured with liberty both times, and, I trust, the word did not fall to the ground."

Arrived at Manchester, on the 7th of December, he preached in the forenoon at Salford Chapel, and in the evening at that in Oldham-Street,

to crowded congregations. In the latter place, notwithstanding its great size, many who came to hear him were, for want of room, disappointed. Long before this period, the fame of his piety, zeal, and talents, attracted multitudes under his ministry, at every place where the population was extensive, whether in his own or any other Circuit. The more he was known, his worth, both as a Preacher and a Christian, was the more highly appreciated. As his fund of divinity was exhaustless, his preaching powers proverbially great, and his zeal warm, and of the legitimate stamp; however long he remained in any place, his most regular hearers never failed to find his discourses possessed of sufficient novelty. Things new, as well as old, he was always able to bring out of his treasure.

Having spent the 9th of December with much comfort amongst his numerous and affectionate friends at Manchester, he preached again in the evening to a very large and attentive congregation, from Gen. i. 27: "God created man in his own image," &c. Proceeding through Halifax, and spending several days at Leeds, and one at York, he addressed attentive congregations at those places; and, on the following day, after his very profitable excursion, he arrived at Hull, where he had the great comfort of uniting with his family in joyful praise to God, for all the striking providences which concurred, in order to his attainment of the principal object of his journey.

Having been wholly prevented from sleeping on the night of December 24, by a painful complaint, from which he suffered much, Mr. Benson lamented that he could not attend church in the forenoon of the next day. "However," says he, "I was enabled to meet classes in the afternoon, and to preach in the evening, which I did with a measure of liberty, from Isa. ix. 6." On the 26th, though distressed with pain, he remarks, "I have endeavoured to write, and fill up my time for God." He adds, "In the evening, I was much assisted in explaining and applying John i. 12. I thank the Lord, I have an evidence that I do receive him in a measure. But O that I could receive him more fully as my Teacher, Lawgiver, Governor, Master, and Friend; in his doctrine, his merits, his Spirit, his example! Lord, assist my weakness!"

In the morning of December 29, Mr. Benson preached on John i. 14: "The Word was made flesh," &c.; and in the evening, on 2 Cor. ix. 15: "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." He professes to have been powerfully assisted, especially in the evening, when he had to address a very large congregation. "My heart," he observes, "was much enlarged, and my mouth opened to address the people on the unspeakable value of the gift of God's Son, the returns which we owe to God for it, and the sin and folly of those who reject such a blessing. I trust, many felt the power of the word, and will long remember it."

Mr. Benson, on the 30th of December, preached on Ps. xc. 12 : "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." He observes, that he "was much assisted, and believes that it was a solemn time to many." He adds, "The Lord is now teaching me by affliction to number my days. May he give me faith and patience !"

On the last day of this year Mr. Benson particularly notices three mercies of a domestic nature. "Add to these things," says he, "I and the children have had health through the year, and been favoured with many spiritual mercies, and with all things richly to enjoy. O that we could, therefore, praise the Lord for his goodness, and live as we ought to his glory !"

"January 1, 1800. The year," says Mr. Benson, "begins with me, with affliction and pain. I have suffered much during the greatest part of this day, having had few intervals of ease. However, with the assistance of Mr. Thompson and Mr. Myles, I was enabled to hold the covenant-meeting; and I found my mind refreshed and comforted, especially while we were singing,

"Vilest of the sinful race,
Lo! I answer to thy call;
Help me, Jesus, show thy face:
Thy grace is free for all."

The whole of that precious hymn was much blessed to my soul. We endeavoured to devote ourselves to God, in the words of Dr. Doddridge, contained in his 'Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul;' the form we generally use having become so common, that it is no longer striking."

On the 4th of January, he remarks, "These have been four very distressing days, indeed. May the Lord support me under this affliction, and sanctify it to me! I bless his name, I find a strong hope that he will."

How true it is, as the old Stoic philosophers were wont to say, that a good man is never miserable, nor a bad man happy! For though true religion, instead of blunting, refines the feelings, yet such as have it in their possession, amidst their greatest sufferings, rejoice in hope, and are sometimes able to say, "In all these things we are more than conquerors." Their afflictions which, abstractedly considered, are sometimes heavy indeed, they, on many accounts, look upon as light, but especially because, that, sanctified to their profit, they "work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." On the other hand, bad men, even in the enjoyment of all which they supposed could make them happy, remain dissatisfied; and when severely afflicted, having no

portion of that joy which flows from union with the ever-blessed God, are wont, with unhappy Voltaire, to wish that they had never been born. Mr. Benson, though exquisitely alive to suffering, having Omnipotence for his strength, never fainted in the day of adversity.

A good man struggling with adversity, without being conquered by it, one of the wisest of the Pagan philosophers, judged a sight worthy of the gods. This sentiment was brought to our recollection by Mr. Benson's sufferings at this time, the manner he struggled with them, and the gratitude he expressed to the only true God on their removal. But let us hear himself upon this useful subject.

"January 5. Although this has been the Lord's-Day, I have not been able to preach, or engage in any public duty. But I thank the Lord, I have found it profitable to wait upon him in private, have had a measure of access, with confidence, to a throne of grace, and been encouraged and refreshed with reading a sermon, on 'The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous,' &c. I trust the Lord, in his due time, will hear prayer, and remove this painful and distressing affliction.—May he do it for his mercies' sake!"

Here Mr. Benson, though greatly afflicted, and without any apprehension of having, on leaving this world, to suffer more in another, manifested a natural and innocent wish to live, so far was he from indulging "a blunt importunate desire of death."

Under the above date, Mr. Benson, after mentioning several particulars relative to his affliction, as if reproving himself for so much as noticing them, says, "What have been my sufferings in comparison of those endured by my Master, or of that noble army of martyrs, some of whom were impaled alive! Alas! that man should be so cruel to man, immersed as he is in miseries, having sufficient sufferings through the infirmity and mortality of his condition, and the ten thousands trials and troubles of life!" This is the language, not only of a man of piety, but also of feeling and reflection.

In the forenoon of January 19, Mr. Benson says he received the Lord's-Supper at the New Church "with much solemnity and comfort." He then adds, that during the distribution of the elements to the communicants, he read carefully over in the Greek Testament, with meditation and prayer, the 1st Epistle to the Thessalonians. In doing this, he observes that he was much instructed. How careful was he to improve every moment, for the purpose of obtaining an accession of grace and knowledge! In the evening he explained and applied to a large congregation, 1 Pet. iv. 18. "I thank the Lord," he says, "I was assisted to speak with clearness and a measure of energy; although, being rather poorly, my voice was not as good as usual."

Any man, arguing from mere theory, would conclude, that persons professing true piety, would, with pleasure, contribute as much toward

the support of the Gospel and charitable institutions as they formerly expended for the purpose of attending sinful sports and amusements. But of that, as of many other theories, we may say with truth, it will not bear the test of experiment. For many, before they made any profession of religion, expended more in one month's time, to procure sinful pleasures, than they have since, during the course of any given year, contributed to charitable purposes. How many of these professors are no better than whited sepulchres, the great day will declare. Some such characters Mr. Benson apprehended were to be found at Beverly, on the 9th of February, when he says, "I preached at two and at six, at which time the congregation was but small; many, we have reason to fear, staying away, to avoid giving any thing to a collection then made, in support of the Sunday-school. Alas! that, after all, so little has been done in this town!"

On the 22d of February, Mr. Benson says, "I still suffer much. I have been in extreme pain almost the whole of this day. However, I thank the Lord, he gave me patience, and, I trust, I shall find this affliction work for good."

Mr. Benson, on February 23, says, he was much assisted in discoursing to a large congregation, on "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." In the evening of the following day, he finished the discourse, a part of which he delivered upon that occasion. In the second part, he says, "I considered the effect St. Paul's reasoning on righteousness, &c. had upon Felix, and cautioned the congregation against his error."

The national fasts and days of thanksgiving Mr. Benson always attended, with the sincerity of a Christian patriot, and the piety of a Minister of Christ.

"March 12. This day," says he, "being appointed as a day of public fasting and humiliation, I preached in the evening on Matt. vi. 16. I thank God, I was much assisted, and, I trust, the word was not spoken in vain. I hope the Lord will answer the many prayers put up to him this day, and restore peace to this nation and all Europe."

The object of this hope was at last attained, but not till after several years of sanguinary warfare, in which tens of thousands perished by the sword. It is to be hoped, that the nations of the earth are verging to the happy period, when they shall learn war no more.

Under date March 23, Mr. Benson says, "My time has been occupied, last week, chiefly in meeting the classes, and in writing a Vindication of the Methodists, in answer to a pamphlet, entitled, 'A Report from the Clergy of a District in the Diocese of Lincoln.' My reason for answering this pamphlet is, because we have received information that it is likely to be the cause, through the influence of the Bishop of

Lincoln, of his Majesty's Ministers bringing forward a Bill that will restrain our liberty, and abridge our privileges."

On the 27th of March, he says, "I have now pretty nearly finished my Vindication of the Methodists, and sent most of it to London to be printed. May the Lord give it his blessing!"

This Vindication, which contains forty-two octavo pages, was addressed, by the author, in a Letter to THOMAS THOMPSON, Esq. of Hull. It is an able and judicious pamphlet, and written very opportunely. A few observations upon it may not be unacceptable to the reader.

In page 3, after acknowledging his obligation to Mr. Thompson, for sending him the pamphlet to which his Vindication is an answer, Mr. Benson proceeds thus: "It appears to me matter of thankfulness, that these Clergymen have taken pains to inquire into, and ascertain the facts which they mention, (p. 6 and 7,) viz. 'That not one-third part of the inhabitants of their parishes attend divine service, and not one-sixth part of the adults, the communion; that sick persons very seldom require the spiritual assistance of their Ministers; that parents and masters are very remiss, in enforcing the attendance of their children and servants on divine worship, and on catechetical instruction; and it is with difficulty the children are prevailed upon to attend, or parents to send them to Sunday-schools; and that there is almost a total disuse,' (it should rather have been said *neglect*; for when were they used in those parishes?) 'of family prayer, and reading the Scriptures.'"

The evils here mentioned are certainly of a lamentable nature; but in proportion to the prevalence of true Christianity, whether by the instrumentality of Church, Dissenting, or Methodist, Ministers, they never fail to be removed.

Mr. Benson proceeds to notice the *causes* assigned by the Clergymen of a district in the Diocese of Lincoln, for that neglect of religious duties which they deplored. Among these they reckoned the circulation of profane, obscene, and seditious writings; the irregular management of alehouses; wakes, feasts, and dancings; cock-fightings, and petty races; with one or two others. The last cause, and that which most engaged their attention, was the increase of Methodism.

Mr. Benson, after noticing those particulars, and mentioning some of the Rules of the Methodist Society, every one of which is opposed to the neglect of religious duties, says: "There is something very extraordinary indeed in this! The increase of the Methodists is the cause of the neglect of religious duties, and yet the Methodists are constantly inculcating religious duties, and do not so much as receive into, or keep in their Societies, any person who lives in the neglect of them! But, 'you draw people from the Church, and from the sacrament at the Church.' Supposing this were true, (which in general it is not,) it would not follow that we made people neglect religious duties, unless it

can be shown that religious duties must, of necessity, be confined to the Church of England, and that God cannot be acceptably worshipped any where else. But, I say, *it is not true*. Thousands, in all parts of the kingdom, who seldom or never came within the Church walls, till they heard us, but idly loitered away the precious hours of the Lord's-day in their own houses, or in idle recreations, or visits, or in journeys of pleasure, or in such worldly business as these Clergymen mention; now see the evil of such practices, and have abandoned them; attend divine service in the Church of England, once or twice every Lord's-day, and the Lord's Supper whenever it is administered in the Church, which, in country places, it is to be deplored, is not often."

The Clergymen in question, amongst other remedies for the removal of the evils which they deplored, recommended some "explanations and amendments of the *Toleration Act*." On this subject, Mr. Benson, notwithstanding his partiality to the Church, says, "So far as the business concerns the Methodists, I beg leave to remark, that it would be an easy thing for the Legislature of this kingdom to amend or explain that Act, so as to lay the whole body of the Methodists and their hearers, not fewer in Great Britain and Ireland than half a million, under the necessity of formally withdrawing from the Established Church, and declaring themselves Dissenters. It is true, the Methodists would not take this step without great reluctance; but they would rather take it a thousand times, than be deprived of those privileges of edification, which they have enjoyed in peace for above half a century."

It may be proper to observe, in this place, that the measures adopted, after this period, to curtail the religious liberty and privileges of the Methodists, eventually, under God, who rules in the kingdoms of men, led to the perfecting of the *Toleration Act*, and to the Methodists' obtaining a legal right to several religious privileges which they had long enjoyed through mere connivance. Thus, in imitation of ancient Rome, the Methodists have hitherto received fresh accessions of strength, numbers, and respectability, by means of such attacks as threatened to destroy their economy; nor will they ever cease, through opposition from *without*, to be a truly religious body, well compacted. If they *ever* fall from that religious eminence on which God has placed them, it must be in consequence of their losing the true spirit of Christianity, by which, as a body, they have hitherto been actuated.

As it had been frequently asserted, that Methodism was unfavourable to loyalty, Mr. Benson, in his "*Vindication*," very properly quotes some passages from the Annual Minutes of Conference, for the purpose of refuting the charge. From the Conference held at Leeds, 1793, he quotes the following passage from an Address published August 6, from the body of preachers to the members of the Methodist Societies, throughout England. "We entreat our Societies at large, to continue, as usual,

in connection with the Church of England, and we shall with great cheerfulness and contentment, labour among them, according to that simple, original plan of Methodism, established and left to us by our venerable friend, the late Rev. Mr. Wesley." "We feel the most unfeigned loyalty to the King, and a sincere attachment to the Constitution. We reverence the Government; are conscious of the many blessings we enjoy under our gracious Sovereign, and are thankful to God for them; and do earnestly recommend the same principles and spirit to you."

From a second Address published in the same year, by the Conference, we quote the following passage. "It has been intimated that some of our Body are defective in loyalty. Show us the men, and the proofs of their guilt, and we will instantly cut them off from our Connexion, as unworthy of any office in the church of God, and as enemies to their King and Country. We hold our SOVEREIGN KING GEORGE, in high estimation. We love our *Country* and its *Constitution*, and, as far as Christian Ministers can go consistently with their functions and the oracles of God, will support our *King* and *Country*, with all we are and have."

What Mr. Benson mentions at page 33 of his Vindication, as highly desirable, viz. that the Legislature would render it binding upon Magistrates to grant licenses to Protestant Ministers, without their professing themselves to be Dissenters, was obtained in 1812, by an Act entitled, "An Act to repeal certain Acts, and amend other Acts, relating to Religious Worship," &c.

Since the passing of that Act, no man, in order to be licensed as a Preacher of the Gospel, is obliged to term himself a Dissenter, but a Protestant. The Declaration to be subscribed is as follows :

"I, A. B., do solemnly declare in the presence of Almighty God, that I am a Christian and a Protestant, and as such that I believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, as commonly received among Protestant Churches, do contain the revealed will of God; and that I do receive the same as the rule of my doctrine and practice." A. B.

This Declaration is surely sufficiently general and liberal.

After satisfactorily answering the arguments in the pamphlet to which his Vindication is a reply, Mr. Benson, in the true spirit of religion and loyalty, thus expresses himself:—"Hitherto, indeed, we have comparatively suffered nothing, at least of late years, nor ever any thing from authority. When *mobs* have occasionally risen to ill-treat and plunder us, as in Staffordshire, in Cornwall, and some parts of Ireland, we have always found protection under the equitable and mild reign of the ILLUSTRIOUS FAMILY now on the THRONE. And conscious of our loy-

alty, and firm attachment to his MAJESTY'S PERSON and GOVERNMENT, we can now dread no oppression, especially considering how long we have been tried, and how well we are known, in every part of the three kingdoms. We know, too, that there are truly pious persons in every department of Church and State, yea, and in both the Navy and Army, whose views with respect to the importance of reforming the nation, to prevent its ruin, are the same with our own. To these, under God, and especially to his *gracious* MAJESTY, who is eminently, the FATHER of his People, we commit our cause, and rest assured, none *will harm us while we are followers of that which is good*, which we hope ever to be. *The Lord liveth, and blessed be our Rock; and let the GOD of our SALVATION be exalted.*"

April 13, being Easter-Day, Mr. Benson preached in the morning on Luke xxiv. 34. "It was," says he, "a very precious time. The congregation was much affected, and I believe, many were much comforted." In the afternoon, he held a Love-feast, at which many, both of the old and young members of the Society, spoke their experience, in a very instructive and affecting manner. In the evening he preached to a large congregation, from 1 Pet. iii. 18.

About this time, the Methodists were alarmed, in consequence of a Bill, which M. Angelo Taylor proposed to bring into Parliament, which would, if enacted, have greatly abridged their religious privileges. Mr. Benson, who was feelingly alive to the interests of that body of Christians amongst whom he had so long and so successfully laboured, used his great talents and influence, in order to prevent the threatened evil. Though Mr. Taylor's intended Bill is seldom so much as mentioned, and though the Methodists have not now any thing to fear from legislative enactments or popular rage, yet the following historic facts, relating to that affair, are worthy a place in this work.

"April 29. Having written," says Mr. Benson, "to Mr. Ward, jun. at Durham, last Wednesday, to advise him to use his influence, with M. Angelo Taylor, their lately-chosen Member, to induce him to withdraw his intended Bill, I had the pleasure to-day of receiving the following answer to that part of my letter:—

'Dear Sir,

'I have now the satisfaction of informing you, that Mr. Taylor has consented to drop his proposed Bill, and has promised me to bring forward neither this nor any measure affecting the Methodists, without our previous knowledge and consent. Mr. Taylor needed only a proper and faithful representation of our principles and practice, to induce him to do this. His ideas of us were founded on the clumsiest misrepresentation, that sin and ignorance could give him. He is now undeceived;

and if he be not our hearty friend, I have great confidence he will not make himself the tool of our enemies.' ”

It appears that Mr. Benson, during his stay at Hull, embraced every opportunity that offered, for the purpose of hearing the Rev. Mr. Dikes; and from the account which he gives of several of his discourses, there can be no doubt that they were admirably calculated to promote the spread of inward and outward religion. “In the forenoon of May 11,” he says, “I heard Mr. Dikes, with much pleasure and profit, discourse on James iii. 2: ‘If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man,’ &c. He showed—1. That not to offend in word was an evidence of a great progress in grace: 2. Pointed out the different ways whereby people offend in word: and 3. Spoke of the remedies, viz. 1. To get the heart renewed by the power of the Holy Ghost, because out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh; 2. To furnish the mind with useful knowledge, that we may not be at a loss for profitable discourse; 3. Keeping the heart with all diligence, and the mouth with a bridle; 4. To examine every night what our conversation has been during the day.”

On the evening of June 8, Mr. Benson, who frequently excelled himself when preaching occasional sermons, delivered a discourse from Gal. vi. 9, for the benefit of the Hull General Infirmary.

The following paragraph, which bears date June 12, is calculated to convey some idea of Mr. Benson’s habitual seriousness, and of the spiritual uses to which he was wont to turn all occurrences:—

“I find, by a letter from Mr. J. Wood, this morning, that Mr. Mather is again much worse, and that very little hope is left of his recovery.—According to appearance, he says, he is not far from the end of his race; his appetite, it seems, is gone, his strength is exhausted, and the springs of life are ready to stand still. His confidence in God, however, is unshaken, and his consolations are not small. May I also be supported at the same hour of trial, which is fast approaching. Old Mr. F——, it seems, and Mr. M’K—— have both entered their rest! Alas! what is life! what an hand-breadth! May our loins be always girded, and our lamps burning!”

Mr. Benson, accompanied by Mr. Pawson, on July 3, visited their very dear and excellent friend, Mr. Mather, then at York, and near the end of his pilgrimage. “I was exceedingly struck,” says Mr. Benson, to see him so pale and emaciated, and to find him so weak as not to be able to speak above his breath. He seemed much concerned for the Methodist Connexion, and said many things to us respecting the measures which, he thought, ought to be adopted. Before we left him, we kneeled down and prayed with him, probably for the last time, with

many tears, and recommended him to God, scarcely expecting to see him again till the day of final accounts."

How amiable is Christian friendship! How unlike that of the world! Mr. Benson and Mr. Pawson, instead of indulging the vain hope, that their beloved friend Mather should have a fancied immortality "in a book, or in a building," joyfully expected to meet him, "with some peculiar and immortal friendship," in the great day of retribution.

On the 18th of July, Mr. Benson says, "My time, this week, has been employed chiefly in preparing for my journey, to attend our ensuing Conference; but, on Wednesday night, I preached at Newlands, and here (at Hull) last night, and, at the Leaders' request, again to-night. We have had a large congregation each time; and this evening, a very affecting season in parting with one another, while I explained and applied Heb. xiii. 20, 21."

Having left Hull on the 19th of July, he proceeded to Barrow, where he preached in the evening, and the next morning, when almost the whole of a large congregation were deeply affected while he addressed them from 1 Cor. ix. 24. At half past one, he preached at Barton, and at five took coach for Lincoln, where he arrived at twelve. On the 22d of July, after an agreeable journey, he arrived in London, where the Conference was held this year. "O," says he, "that I could praise the Lord for his goodness!" After having been chiefly employed for some days, in assisting to draw up a rough draught of the stations of the Preachers, he was happy, on the forenoon of July 26, to spend some hours in private. On the 27th, he says, "In the morning, I found my mind much engaged with God in prayer, that he would assist me in preaching, and bless his word. And I had reason to believe, that he heard and answered. While I explained to a large congregation of Preachers and people 1 Cor. i. 23, 24, I was much assisted, and the word was with power. The whole congregation was very attentive, and many were much affected. May the fruit appear many days hence!"

On the 28th of July, the day on which the Conference met, Mr. Benson, after mentioning his having been appointed Superintendent of the London Circuit, which, at that time, was exceedingly extensive, observes, with his wonted spirit of true devotion, "May I be qualified for my important station, and may the Lord bless my labours in this great city!"

Such was the estimation in which Mr. Benson's sermons were held, that his brethren, the Preachers, persuaded him to preach as often as possible at every Conference which he attended. Though appointed this year to labour in London, he was prevailed upon to preach at City-Road Chapel, on August 3, at six in the evening, when, to an exces-

sively crowded congregation, he preached from one of his favourite subjects ;—" Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me ?" " I thank the Lord," says he, " I was assisted to speak with clearness and energy ; and, I trust, the word was made a blessing to many."

On the 13th of August, Mr. Benson says, " I thank God, he has preserved my wife and family, and brought them all safe hither. My wife, indeed, is but in a poor state of health, but the children are all very well. Thanks be to the Lord for all his mercies !"

Having preached at Snowfields on the evening of August 15, he says, " The congregation, I think, was not larger than it used to be twenty-eight years ago."

On the 31st of August, Mr. Benson preached at Queen-Street a sermon, on account of the death of his excellent friend, Mr. Mather, and another in the evening at the City-Road Chapel. " The chapel," he says, " was prodigiously crowded in the evening, and I found much liberty in speaking." The excellent discourse which he delivered upon that occasion was inserted, soon after, in the Methodist Magazine, and also published as a separate tract.

On the 7th of September, having been invited for the purpose, he preached to a very genteel congregation, at the chapel in Orange-Street, in which the Rev. Augustus Toplady formerly preached, and strenuously inculcated his doctrine of the absolute decrees. " But," says Mr. Benson, " the views of the congregation are so altered, or, at least, their prejudices are so softened, that they are willing to hear the truth from a Methodist Preacher."

Surely, what may be properly termed the Christian world now see more clearly than ever the followers of Christ did since the Apostolic age, the sin and folly of violently contending in favour of, or in opposition to, *opinions*, which by all competent judges, are distinguished from matters of faith. This, in a good sense, is a liberal age, in which tens of thousands so blend orthodoxy with charity, that it is difficult to determine in which of the two they excel. Surely, the former days were far from being better than the present. Both the civil and religious world are now, and have been for almost a century, in a progressive state of melioration.

Mr. Benson after mentioning, under date October 18, that he had been graciously assisted in preaching at different places, in the course of the four preceding days, adds, " My mind, also, has been kept in peace, although my faith has been much tried, both through my own affliction and through that of my wife." Under the same date, he notices his having spent an hour with Mr. Shaw, at Tottenham, and that he was much affected to see him so much afflicted. " His affliction," says he, " is great indeed, and so are his patience and resignation, of which

grace he is a bright example. May the Lord prepare me for, and support me under, every dispensation of his Providence that awaits me!"

While discoursing at Spitalfields, on the morning of October 19, on Luke v. 31, 32, Mr. Benson observes, that he was much assisted, and that many felt the power of the word. In the evening, at City-Road Chapel, he says, "I was favoured with much liberty in explaining and applying Luke xiii. 24. The congregation was very large and very attentive."

At the end of December 28, Mr. Benson gives the following account of that day: "I thank the Lord, this has been a good day to me, and I have been much assisted in my work. In the morning, at Queen-Street, I explained and improved John iii. 16, and was peculiarly assisted. My own mind was affected, and so were the minds of many of the hearers. In the evening, also, I was enabled to speak with much freedom, while I discoursed on 1 Kings xviii. 21. I was led to speak much concerning the uncertainty of life, and to express my apprehensions that, although we were brought so near the close of the year, yet some of the congregation might be called from time before the commencement of the new year."

We are informed, that a gentleman, who had been sceptical in his opinions, hearing this sermon, was awakened, and became truly religious. The same person is now a highly respectable Clergyman, and distinguished theological writer.

Mr. Benson having to preach again at Queen-Street Chapel, on the 29th of December, was informed, in the vestry, previous to his going into the pulpit, that a woman, in the prime of life, and in perfect health, who had heard him there the night before, when he spoke so particularly on the uncertainty of life, had been seized with a violent complaint in the night, and died about five o'clock in the morning. Surely, in the midst of life we are in death; but alas! how few can, with the venerable and heavenly minded JOHN FLETCHER, say, that they always feel eternity inexpressibly near!

It is a *trite*, but *just* observation, very familiar to the old Puritans, who, in their best days, attended much more to sound divinity and good sense, than to correctness or elegance of style; that such as record providences will have providences to record. One of these, Mr. Benson, who had well learned to acknowledge the Lord in all his ways, notices under date January 3, 1801. "This day, we have received intelligence from Hull, that our eldest son obtained, on Thursday last, the election, which our friends there have been soliciting for him. Blessed be God, for his goodness!"

Mr. Benson, on the 7th of January, dined with the Rev. Mr. Mason, Rector of Bermondsey, in company with three other Clergymen. "After

dinner," he says, "we had much conversation respecting Christian Perfection, and some other doctrines wherein we differ from the Calvinists. How desirable it is, that all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity should be united in love to each other!" It is highly desirable that they should; and the fact is, that they are; for he that loves God, loves his brother also.

The 25th of January was to Mr. Benson a day in which it appears a more than common degree of the unction of the Holy One accompanied his ministrations. "Blessed be the Lord, I have been peculiarly assisted this day. In the morning, at City-Road Chapel, while I was explaining the former part of the Parable of the wise and foolish Virgins, I was assisted to speak with clearness and with unction. In the evening also in finishing the same subject, I was enabled to declare the truth in a manner that carried conviction, I trust, to many hearts. O Lord let thy special blessing follow the word, and grant that I may have oil in my vessel to the last, and my lamp lighted."

The following is Mr. Benson's own account of his labours on the 8th of March; labours, one would imagine, sufficient to injure the best constitution.

"This has been to me a day of hard labour. I met classes from six to eight o'clock in the morning. I then attended the Local Preachers' meeting till nine. At ten I read prayers and preached at Spitalfields. At two I began again to meet classes, and continued till after five. At six I preached at City-Road Chapel, and continued till eight. The congregation was very large. After that service was concluded, I continued to give tickets for an hour."

On April 3, being Good-Friday, Mr. Benson preached both forenoon and evening. On those occasions he was favoured with much liberty; but especially in the evening, when both himself and the congregation were much affected, while he gave out some hymns on the subject of Christ's sufferings.

We quote the following passage, chiefly on account of the judicious remark it contains on the subject of Ministers' preaching sometimes with more liberty than at others.

"May 24. In the forenoon I preached at Snowsfields on the same subject on which I preached at Spitalfields last Monday night, but had not, by any means, so much liberty. Thus the Lord shows us, and shows the people, that we are entirely dependent on him; that none may glory in man, and that we may not trust in ourselves."

According to previous appointment, Mr. Benson, on the 25th of May, preached in the forenoon at City-Road Chapel, to the children of the Sunday schools, and to young persons. It was thought there were present between three and four thousand children, beside many hundreds of young people, together with teachers, parents, guardians, &c. The

chapel and morning-chapel were exceedingly crowded; indeed so much, that many who came to hear could not possibly gain admission. "I suppose," says Mr. Benson, "there never was any thing like so many human beings in the chapel before. It was a most lovely and affecting sight. They heard in general with great attention, and sung most sweetly. I preached on 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. I bless the Lord, I was enabled, I hope, to speak in a manner intelligible and forcible; and I trust that much good will arise from the opportunity." His sermon on this occasion was published at the request of the Sunday School Committee.

The simplicity, ease, and perspicuity with which Mr. Benson preached, upon all occasions, rendered him, notwithstanding his superior talents, better understood by the bulk of his hearers, than the generality of such Ministers as compared with him, were children in Divinity as well as in understanding. Conceiving clearly, and always attending much more to things than words, his discourses were generally intelligible and relished by all whose minds were, to any considerable extent, enlightened; and to many who had, previously to their hearing him, sat in the region and shadow of death, great light came through the medium of his sound, able, and energetic ministry. The great day alone will declare how many he was made the happy instrument of turning to righteousness.

When a congregation is alarmed by any thing unusual, it is of great importance, in order to their safety, for the Preacher officiating to have presence of mind, and complete self-command. The truth of this remark will appear from the following paragraph, which occurs under date June 7, in Mr. Benson's Journal. "In the forenoon, when I read to the conclusion of the second lesson, at Deptford, a woman, seized with a fit, uttered so loud and dismal a shriek, that, in a moment, the whole congregation was thrown into the utmost confusion. Women fainted, men were greatly alarmed, and all were on their feet, and making towards the door. But upon my speaking to them, and assuring them that there was no cause for the commotion, they became calm; and I went on with the service, and preached with a measure of satisfaction on 1 Cor. iii. 11—13."

On the 25th of July, Mr. Benson, who was the Representative from the London District, to the Conference at Leeds, for drawing up a rough draft of the Preachers' stations for this year, says: "We have completed, as far as we are able, the Plan for the stationing the Preachers, and have taken into consideration a plan for biennial Conferences. This would save the Connexion about £1000 every second year;—an object surely of considerable magnitude."

As none of the Preachers now propose to substitute biennial for annual Conferences, and as with the latter the Methodists continue in a state of prosperity; it does not appear either necessary or expedient to

inquire, to which of the two the preference ought to be given. *Innovations*, whether in Church or State, when not fully proved necessary, are, on account of their attendant and consequent evils, with us objects of suspicion; and we conceive that in favour of this suspicion, we may urge reason, scripture, and the history of the world. Even the wise and good in common with the mass of mankind, are, to an amazing extent, creatures of habit. Inspiration commands us to be upon our guard against those who are *given to change*.

On the 2d of August, Mr. Benson says, "At the request of Mr. Pawson, I have taken his place this evening, and preached before the Conference, on the occasion of the admission of the young Preachers. 'The subject I spoke on was Eph. iii. 8. The chapel was so prodigiously crowded, that there was no possibility of getting in or out, or of making the collection for the expenses of the Conference in the seats. Indeed there were several thousands who could not get in; so that there were four different preachers appointed to preach without, while I was preaching in the chapel. I thank the Lord, I was favoured with peculiar freedom in preaching; and I believe it was a profitable time to many.'"

Mr. Benson having determined to return to London by way of Hull, arrived at York in the forenoon of the 10th of August. Having spent the afternoon comfortably, he preached with much freedom in the evening to a pretty large congregation. On the next evening, at Hull, from Heb. ii. 1, he addressed a large audience.

An account that the preliminaries of peace had been signed betwixt Great Britain and the French republic, having arrived in London on the 2d of October, Mr. Benson, always a man of peace, and in a good sense, a citizen of the world, thus expresses himself upon the subject: "This morning, to the utter astonishment and joy of the whole city, it has been announced by a letter from Lord Hawksbury to the Lord Mayor, that the preliminaries of peace are signed with the French Republic. The Ministers, themselves, it seems, did not know till Wednesday night, that Bonaparte would accede to their proposals: hence they kept the matter a profound secret. Some few, it seems, that had some intelligence of what was going forward, have made their fortunes in the Stocks. We joyfully gave thanks to God for the good news, at our intercession at noon."

Mr. Benson, who possessed much of that love which "thinks no ill where no ill seems;" and who was himself too sincere to be disposed to suspect the sincerity of others; looked upon the peace signed about this time, a peace which was no better than a hollow truce, as a "consummation devoutly to be wished."

Without entering into the niceties of casuistical divinity, we may with safety assert, that, in numberless instances, matters of prudence are dis-

inct from those of morality: and hence, in the former, a good man may doubt, without being condemned. These observations naturally arose from a perusal of the following paragraph written by Mr. Benson, under date October 13.

“This morning we sent our second son in the coach to the Rev. Mr. Thomason’s, near Cambridge, where he is to stay a day or two before he goes to reside at College. Providence seems to have opened his way: but I have many doubts respecting the propriety of this step. May it be over-ruled to God’s glory, and his present and eternal advantage!”

Though sudden deaths are far from generally taking place, yet they occur so frequently, that they point out the madness and folly of those who rest secure without a meetness for the divine inheritance. This life is in order to the next; and what men sow in time they shall reap in eternity.

A case of sudden death Mr. Benson mentions October 19. “Last night, in preaching, I was led to speak much concerning the shortness and uncertainty of life, and the necessity of complying immediately with the call of God: and the doctrine received an awful confirmation in the sudden death of Mr. W., Coal-Merchant. He was at the chapel here in the morning in his usual health. Indeed he seemed uncommonly well, and in good spirits. After service was over, he went to dine with a friend in Wapping, in company with Dr. Whitehead, where he spent the afternoon. He heard the Doctor preach in the evening, and stayed while he met the society. And it was observed by some, that he sung with all his might. He afterwards walked up the street with the Doctor, apparently in perfect health, only complaining of being rather weary, as they went through Wellclose Square. He called at Dr. Whitehead’s house, and observing that he perspired profusely, the Doctor ordered the servant to bring him a little rum and water; but before she came with it, he expired, and would have fallen off the chair, had not the Doctor held him up.”

Mr. Benson who always availed himself of every occurrence which might have a tendency to awaken careless sinners to a sense of their danger, says: “I endeavoured to improve the awful event to-night at Wapping, by exhorting the congregation, from Matt. xxiv. 44, to be ready, because in such an hour as men think not, the Son of man cometh.”

It will be admitted by all competent judges, that no man, whatever may be his natural and acquired abilities, can, without an experimental knowledge of the truth, preach to much valuable purpose. That some such characters enter into the ministry is a truth too obvious to admit of dispute. With one of this description Mr. Benson had an interview, on the 3d of November.—He remarks, “I had much conversation to-day with Mr. ———, a clergyman, who has frequently been brought to hear

me preach. He seems to be under good impressions, and to be inquiring after truth, but yet very ignorant of divine things."

Mr. Benson's account of his labours on the 6th December is as follows: "In the morning, from six to eight o'clock I met classes; at eight I breakfasted, and met the Local Preachers till nine. I then walked to Queen-Street, where I read prayers and preached, for the benefit of the Charity-School there, from Gen. xviii. 19. I spent the afternoon agreeably and comfortably at Mr. Butterworth's, partly in conversation with serious friends, and partly in private meditation on the subject I intended preaching from in the evening. At six I preached again for the same Charity. My text was Lam. iii. 27. I was much assisted in preaching both times. The congregations were large and attentive."

Alive to the best interests of all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost had made him an overseer, Mr. Benson, on the 12th of December, rejoiced on account of the state of spiritual prosperity in which he found many, and lamented the case of some, who, in the enjoyment of many religious privileges, were wandering more or less from the narrow way of holiness. "I have been," says he, "busily engaged all this week in meeting Classes, chiefly at the City Road Chapel, Wapping, and Spitalfields. I find many of the people much alive to God, and in a comfortable state; but some seem very lukewarm and indifferent to divine things."

At the conclusion of the year 1801, Mr. Benson, after having in general terms expressed his gratitude for the blessings received by himself and family, in the course of it, adds, "In providing a situation for my eldest son; in directing the way for my younger son's admission to the University; and above all, in restoring my wife from a state of great weakness, and giving her a considerable degree of health and strength. O that I may be thankful, as I ought to be, to the Lord for his mercies, and devote myself afresh to his service!"

It is not surprising that young men, not properly grounded in the principles of Christianity, nor much under moral control, should, through their intercourse with the French, during their travels in Europe, imbibe the principles of infidelity. Moral poison is very congenial to the unrenewed heart; and that poison has for many years been extensively circulated on the Continent of Europe. How many hopeful young English gentlemen have, by means of one Continental tour, had their morals debauched, and been robbed of their religious principles! A lamentable case of this sort, Mr. Benson mentions under date, January 21. Of a gentleman in company with whom he spent the evening he says: "He related to me some family trials he had to endure; and among the rest, a son he had sent abroad, had returned deeply infected with French Atheism, French politics, and French sensuality. He ex-

pressed an apprehension, that his distress would terminate in his blowing out his brains. I spoke what appeared most fitted to be of use to him."

To such as knew how to set a due estimate on Mr. Benson's worth as a scholar and divine, his opinions of some tenets held by Dr. Macknight, in which he differs from the generality of orthodox commentators, will be acceptable.

On the 19th of February, he says, "I have read with attention and profit Macknight's Translation, Paraphrase, and Notes, on the first Epistle to the Thessalonians; and I think he has cast much light on the Epistle, and improved the translation of many passages, but cannot suppose that the Apostle had in view to interweave with his Epistle, and set in view before his readers, all the principal arguments in favour of the truth of Christianity. And especially, I cannot approve of his view of the day of judgment, and the future misery of the wicked, viz. that no particular inquiry will be made into men's actions, but that the form of every one's body will fully manifest his state and character, and that the bodies of the wicked will be raised corruptible, and will be consumed in the general conflagration."

Mr. Benson, who appears to have lived under an habitual sense of the shortness and uncertainty of life, on March 20, notices the sudden death of Mr. S. and Mr. T. "Both of them, from a state of apparent health and strength, by a few days sickness were brought to the chambers of death." He then adds: "Mr. Ruth, a pious Dissenter, was well on Wednesday morning, and was a corpse the next evening! May we all be found ready!"

From the constant tenour of Mr. Benson's journal, it is evident that he knew well how to unite, in order to his spiritual improvement, and consequent happiness, "true taste of life, and constant thought of death." Whoever can derive no comfort from the contemplation of death, is truly miserable. This, unhappy Voltaire proved, when he exclaimed, "I wish I had never been born!"

April 12, Mr. Benson observes: "This evening, while I was praying before sermon at Queen-Street Chapel, Mr. Folgham was suddenly taken ill on the front of the gallery, and after groaning most awfully for a few moments, expired on the spot. Some of the friends bore him down into the vestry, where I found him on the table, on his back, much altered, when the service was over. It was an awful and affecting scene to those that were present."

At Rotherhithe, on the 15th of April, Mr. Benson, after mentioning that he had a good congregation, says, "Mr. Middleton, the Curate of the parish, not only attended himself, but also brought several of his friends. He seems a truly pious man, and much concerned for the progress of the Gospel."

On the 24th of April, Mr. Benson mentions his having devoted some time, in the course of the two or three preceding days, to the perusal of Bonnet's Philosophical and Critical Inquiries concerning Christianity. "It is, indeed," he remarks, "a very valuable work, and, I think, well calculated to check the progress of infidelity in this and other nations."

It is in the time of great affliction, especially, that the power of religion is most displayed. Of all cutaneous diseases, that of cancer is probably the most painful; and yet some, under the force of that disease, which has a natural and powerful tendency to drink up the spirits, have continued to rejoice in God. Mr. Benson says, on May 9, "I called to see Mrs. Rainsford, dying, as it is supposed, of a cancer. I was comforted and refreshed in speaking to her, and trust she will make a happy exit out of this world of trial and trouble."

Orthodoxy and charity are not more congenial than science and true religion. It is evident to all, possessed of a competent knowledge of both the one and the other, that the former, as well as the latter, tends to promote the increase of whatever is lovely and of good report. That such were Mr. Benson's views, on the 11th of May, appears from the following paragraph:—

"This evening, our lecture (for Mr. Wood and I attend one hour every week, a course of lectures on the human body,) was on the eye; and in the dissection of it, I obtained, I think, a clearer view of its coats and humours than I had before. 'These are thy glorious works, Parent of Good!' The more I consider them, the more I adore their great Maker!"

By those who maintain that Preachers, independent of divine influence, may not only preach with clearness and ease, which is a possible case, but so as to spread the savour of the knowledge of Christ, the following passage, bearing date May 16, will be judged paradoxical: "This forenoon I discoursed at City-Road Chapel, on Heb. ii. 1, and was very peculiarly assisted. The Lord enlarged my heart, and opened me a door of utterance, and enabled me to speak strong and penetrating things. Many were much affected, and, I trust, the whole congregation was edified. How different from Thursday night last, when I was much straitened, and had nothing to say to the purpose! Thus does the Lord teach me my entire dependence on him."

Mr. Benson, on the 27th of May, observes, that he had spent the three preceding days chiefly in examining some manuscripts, left by the Rev. Peard Dickinson. He adds, "I am pleased to find, that a very instructive Life of him may be prepared."

Not long after this period, Mr. Benson published a Memoir of that pious, learned, judicious, and modest Minister of Christ, which, though comparatively little known, is worthy of extensive circulation. Many

have obtained a degree of celebrity, as authors, who never wrote such a work as Mr. Dickinson's *Life of Melancthon*. His worth was of a modest, unobtrusive nature; worth never sufficiently discerned nor appreciated by the multitude.

May 30, Mr. Benson says, "My time has been fully employed to-day. From six to eight, I met classes. I then met the Local Preachers. I afterwards walked through the rain to Snowfields, and after reading prayers, preached at half past ten. Immediately after dinner, I returned to the City-Road Chapel, where I was employed in meeting classes till five o'clock. At six, I preached on occasion of the Rev. Peard Dickinson's death, from Jer. xiv. 8; a passage chosen by Mr. Dickinson himself. The congregation was large, and the account I had collected of his life and death was, I trust, edifying to the hearers."

If Ministers of Christ, after having heard any of their brethren preach, conceive them to be erroneous in doctrine, or defective in the inculcation of religious truth, instead of making one or the other a subject of conversation in the absence of the persons concerned, would act as Mr. Benson did in the following instance, it would better promote the interests of true religion. Having mentioned, July 1, that the business of the District Meeting had been transacted in harmony and love, he adds, "Mr. —, a young man, preached this evening a well-digested sermon, on Heb. iv. 2. But as he proceeded through the whole, on a supposition that the word of God is sufficient for our salvation, I took him aside afterwards, and remonstrated with him on the necessity of the influences of the Spirit, to render it available to that end."

In this instance, Mr. Benson acted the part of a friend and a father; and it is probable that his timely admonition proved of lasting advantage to this young man. Youth is naturally rash and self-confident; and hence, such young Ministers of Christ as are not eminently holy, are too apt to spurn the necessary reproofs and profitable admonitions of their senior brethren, however well qualified to be their instructors.

The Conference being held this year at Bristol, Mr. Benson, who was appointed by the Preachers in the London District to be their Representative to the Committee for stationing the Preachers, arrived there on the 20th of July. On the 24th, he says, "We have spent the four last days in preparing a draught of the stations of the Preachers, to be laid before the Conference. I hope we have been enabled to give satisfaction both to the Preachers and the people in general."

The General Conference assembled on the 26th of July, when Mr. Joseph Taylor was chosen President, and Dr. Coke, Secretary. On the evening of that day, Mr. Benson preached at City-Road Chapel to a crowded congregation of Preachers and people, from Acts xxvi. 27.

At the request of the Trustees and Leaders, Mr. Benson preached again at City-Road Chapel, on the forenoon of the 1st of August. His

subject was 1 John i. 3. Upon that occasion, he was favoured with much liberty while preaching; and the divine power so accompanied the blessed truths he delivered, that many were much affected, and greatly comforted. Part of the afternoon he spent in drawing up a character of the late Mr. Hopper, having, in the previous week, prepared one of Mr. Dickinson.

The following character of Mr. Dickinson, written by Mr. Benson, and approved of by the Conference, is worthy a place in this work:—

“*The Rev. Peard Dickinson.*—A man of genuine and exalted piety, and of an exemplary and edifying conversation. He was brought to the knowledge of the truth when he was but a youth, being only about sixteen years of age. After passing through very deep waters, which he calls, in some Memoirs of his life, ‘a dreadful dispensation,’ and after being almost overwhelmed in the billows of despondency and distress, he was fully and powerfully delivered by the Spirit of Adoption, sent into his heart as sudden as lightning from heaven, and enabling him to cry ‘Abba, Father.’ From that time to his death, he generally walked in the light of God’s countenance, and had deep and almost constant communion with God, rejoicing frequently with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Being from his childhood, attached to literary pursuits, and being favoured with great advantages for making progress therein, both at the school which he attended at Taunton, and at the University of Oxford, where he was admitted to the degree of Master of Arts, at the usual time; he became both a good classical scholar, and a great proficient in the Sciences. He devoted himself to the service of God, in the Gospel of his Son, in the Established Church, and was ordained a Minister thereof when he was about twenty-five years of age. After spending two years as Curate of that venerable man, the late Rev. Vincent Perronet, of Shoreham, (whose daughter he afterwards married,) upon the Rev. Mr. Wesley’s invitation, he removed to London, where he exercised his ministry in the Methodist Connexion with zeal and diligence, till, through indisposition of body, he was obliged to desist from a calling which above all others, he loved, and in which his whole heart was engaged. His abilities, as a Preacher, were not extraordinary, but they were greatly improved towards the latter part of his life; and as a deeply-experienced Christian, and an humble steady follower of the Lord Jesus, he was much respected by all the people among whom he laboured. His constitution of body was delicate, and his infirmities many; and, during the three last years of his life, his afflictions were very great, complicated, and painful. A murmuring word was never heard fall from his lips, nor a discontented look observed in his countenance; but resignation, meekness, long-suffering, and love, were habitual tempers of his mind, and the rules of his conversation. His discourses with his friends that, from time to time, visited him, were most intelli-

gent and instructive; and, after the most affectionate expressions of love and consolation to his mournful partner, and other relatives and friends, in the greatest peace and most triumphant joy, he sweetly slept in Jesus, on Saturday, May 15, in the forty-fourth year of his age. His last words were, ‘Hark!—do you not hear? They are come for me!—I am ready,—quite ready.—Stop,—say nothing, but glory,—glory!’ ”

Such was the safe, happy, nay, triumphant end of *Peard Dickinson*; a name not much known among men, but one which, in the great day of accounts, will be found to occupy a place amongst those who *shall shine as the stars for ever and ever*.

Would Christians in general “follow peace with all men,” and “confirm their love one to another,” many stumbling-blocks, which lie in the way of those who have neither the form nor power of godliness, would be removed, and that blessed religion, which includes universal benevolence, being adorned by its professors, would spread with a rapidity, of which we find few instances in Ecclesiastical History. But, in proportion to the prevalence of mutual animosities among the professed followers of the Prince of Peace, his blessed religion sinks in the estimation of the mass of mankind, who confound it with the conduct of its professors. “Woe to the world,” says Christ, “because of offences! and woe unto him by whom the offence cometh.” Had these things been duly attended to at ——— by the Society there, in general, there would have been no cause for Mr. Benson, on the 19th of August, to write the following paragraph:—

“I preached this evening at ———, on Rom. x. 4, and had a measure of liberty; but afterwards I had a most disagreeable business in hand, in endeavouring to appease and settle the minds of the leaders, and several of the people exasperated against each other, on very trivial accounts. I found a flame kindled among them, which, I fear, will not soon be quenched. I was detained till near ten o’clock.”

On the evening of October 3, Mr. Benson preached in an Independent Chapel. He feared that his doctrine, from Matt. v. 20, was too strong for some of his hearers upon that occasion. “I endeavoured, however,” says he, “to declare the truth, and nothing but the truth, and to leave the matter with God.” After preaching he went to the house of Mr. St—k, where he was highly pleased to find, that it was the custom for every one in the family, after having returned from divine service, to retire for some time, in order to pray and meditate. How different is that excellent custom from that of many, who, on their return from hearing a sermon, gratify their pride and vanity, by impertinent remarks upon both the Preacher and his discourse!

At the request of some friends, Mr. Benson preached at the City-Road Chapel, from Eph. v. 15, 16: “See that ye walk circumspectly, redeeming the time.” His discourse from this passage was, no doubt,

clearly and strongly practical. - The congregation was large and very attentive, and he mentions that he was much assisted, and that the word was very profitable to many of his hearers.

One reason why Simpson's *Plea for Religion* is so popular amongst a certain class of readers is, the severity with which the author treats the Clergy of the Established Church. Infidels themselves, though far from admitting the cogency of his arguments in proof of the truth and certainty of Christianity, praise him for his attack upon that church, in the pale of which he was, for a long series of years, eminently useful. It is much to be regretted, that a man, so long known in the religious and literary world, should have attacked our venerable Church Establishment, to which, under God, we are indebted for both civil and religious liberty. It was by means of the Established Church, not the exertions of Sects, that God, in the infinitely wise economy of his providence crushed Popery in England, and caused this to be a free Protestant country.

The following are Mr. Benson's observations upon the work in question: "Nov. 6. I have spent part of these three or four last days in reading Simpson's *Plea for Religion*, published since his death. It contains much information on various subjects, and is, I hope, calculated to do good; but in divers parts of it he is so excessively severe upon the Clergy, that I fear it will prejudice many of them, and of the friends of the Established Church, against vital religion, which is now universally termed Methodism."

On the forenoon of December 25, Mr. Benson preached to a very large congregation at City-Road Chapel, from the former part of Isaiah ix. 6. "I spoke," says he, "of Christ as the Son of man and Son of God, and on the government with which he is invested. The congregation was very attentive." On the forenoon of December 26, he at the City-Road, preached from the latter part of the same text. "His name shall be called Wonderful," &c. "My mind," he observes, "was much enlarged, and my mouth open to speak with freedom and power, and the people seemed in general, not only very attentive, but much affected." Both the sermons were published at the request of many hearers.

This may be as proper a place as any other to take some notice of a volume of sermons written by Mr. Benson, at different times, but published in 1802. The following passage, taken from the Preface to those Discourses, is descriptive of both them and the author.

"Most of those truths of experimental and practical Christianity, (the only Christianity that will afford any one comfort at a dying hour,) to which I have believed myself to be called of God to bear testimony, and which, in conjunction with my Brethren, I have been labouring, for upwards of thirty years, to propagate in most parts of Great Britain, are

here explained and enforced according to the best ability God hath given me. The end I have in view, in writing and publishing these Sermons, is the same I have pursued through the whole course of my Ministry, and that is, *simply* and *only* to glorify God, in the reformation and salvation of my fellow-creatures. I have therefore not studied elegance of style, or the oratorical ornaments of speech, because, if I could have attained to this excellency, and could have spared the time which that kind of composition would have cost me, I had no reason to suppose that it would either have recommended these sermons to such as, it was probable, would peruse them, or have given the truths contained in them a greater influence on their minds. But I have endeavoured to write, exactly as I always wish to preach, in a *plain, clear, and intelligible* manner; and with such an arrangement of matter, and such a connection of the parts of each discourse, as seemed best calculated to assist the conceptions and memories of my readers. I have studied also to write with some degree of force and energy, especially in the applicatory part of each sermon. How far I have succeeded, must be left to the public to judge. I am, however, not without hope, that, as I am conscious I have written, and I trust I generally speak, from the heart, so that some part at least of these plain and unadorned Discourses will reach the hearts of those Readers, that receive the truth as it is in Jesus, with attentive and unprejudiced minds; and in a spirit of prayer."

Mr. Benson, who, in all the sermons he preached, and the works he published, paid abundantly more attention to things than to words, succeeded much better from both the pulpit and the press, than, in all probability, he would have done, had he paid more attention to his style.—With Demosthenes, to whom one of the first Preachers of this age compared him, he was enabled so to fill the minds of his hearers with the subjects he discussed, as to leave them little time or inclination for admiring him, or examining the style in which he addressed them.

The first sermon in the volume Mr. Benson preached before the Conference, at Leeds, in July, 1793. He terms it "Christ's Commission to his Ministers." The text is Mark xvi. 15, 16. Having with clearness and precision shown what we are to understand by the Gospel, he proceeds to inform the reader how it is to be preached. All who had the happiness of sitting for any considerable time under his able ministry, know that his faithfulness in, as well as out of the pulpit, was such as to enable him to address so respectable a body of Ministers as the Methodist Conference, in the following language.

"If this (what he had just described) be the nature of the Gospel, it will not be difficult to say, what is implied in preaching it. It is, undoubtedly, first, to teach the truths which it reveals. This must be done *clearly*, in language intelligible to all, even the most ignorant and illiterate; and, if possible, with such a judicious arrangement of matter, and

distinctness of method, that while lower truths, and such as are more easily understood, make way for, and prepare the mind to receive those that are higher, and of more difficult apprehension, all may easily and lastingly be remembered. Again; it must be done *fully*. Nothing that will be profitable to our hearers, must be kept back from them, but the whole counsel of God must be declared, at least, as far as concerns their salvation, present or eternal. And if we have not opportunity, during the short time of our residence with a people, to enter upon and discuss the controverted, and less important truths of Christianity, we must, at least, take care to explain to them its leading and essential doctrines.—Further; these truths must be taught *affectionately*. We must instruct our people as a father instructs his children, whom he dearly loves, and whose welfare, in time and in eternity, he has at heart. Love to them and an earnest desire for their salvation, must be the spring of all our discourses. Our preaching in public, and our exhortations in private, must flow from this principle; and the affection of our hearts must manifest itself in all our words and actions. We must speak as those that ‘have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way, remembering, that we ourselves, also, are compassed about with infirmity,’ while, at the same time, we rejoice in the increasing knowledge, and holiness of those that ‘receive the truth in the love of it.’ Once more: We must inculcate these truths *diligently*; as St. Paul enjoins Timothy, charging him ‘before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ,’ to observe this injunction. We must so preach the word as to be ‘instant in season and out of season;’ must ‘convince, reprove, and exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.’ Yea, and in order hereto, as the Apostle further observes, must watch in all things, that we may let ‘no fair occasion pass unheeded by,’ but may discern and embrace every favourable opportunity, whether in private or in public, of communicating knowledge. We must be ready to endure afflictions and hardships of every kind, in the prosecution of our work, not counting our ease, our honour, our liberty, or our lives, dear unto ourselves, so we may but ‘do the work of Evangelists, make full proof of our calling, finish our course with joy, and the ministry we have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God.’ ”

The sentiments contained in this quotation, and expressed in a proper theological style, equally opposed to affectation on the one hand, and abstruseness on the other: cannot fail to obtain the approbation of every pious and intelligent reader. The perspicuity discernible in all Mr. Benson’s discourses, from the pulpit, and his works from the press, was chiefly owing to his thorough acquaintance with every subject on which he either wrote, or spoke in public.

The second sermon, as it occurs in the volume before us, was preached at the New Chapel, in Lowgate, Hull, on December 30, 1787. That

striking passage contained in 2 Cor. iii. 3, 4, was the subject matter of the discourse.

This, like the sermon preceding it, not in order of time, but place, is able, judicious, and evangelical. A second sermon upon the above-mentioned text, Mr. Benson styles, "The Devices whereby the god of this world prevents the efficacy of the Gospel."

As a specimen of the manner in which Mr. Benson, towards the close of his sermons, was in the habit of addressing his hearers, we, from this discourse, quote the following passage. Referring to the necessity of speedily turning to God, he says: "Perhaps you think it is time enough yet. But is it not late enough? Have you not already served the world, the flesh, and the devil long enough? Have you not long enough rebelled against God, crucified his Son afresh, and grieved the Spirit of Grace? Have you not been long enough *unholy* and *unhappy*, a robber of God, and a murderer of your soul? Surely you have; yea, too long. And why will you suffer Satan to infatuate and make a prey of you any longer? Consider what condition you would be in, if the Lord should say, 'My Spirit shall no longer strive with that man; he is wedded to his idols, let him alone; let him fill up the measure of his iniquities, and ripen for a more aggravated destruction!' And are you sure he will not do this? May he not justly do it? Surely he may, and you have cause to wonder that it is not done already.—Besides, think where you would be, should death, relentless death, step in between you and repentance, and arrest you in the midst of your delays? And have you any assurance to the contrary? You know you have not. You are sensible you have no certainty of living *a day, an hour, or a moment*. Wherefore delay no longer; but, as 'now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation,' so, 'to-day, while it is called to-day, hear his voice, and harden not your heart.' "

All this, a mere *repeater*, who is an insignificant character, might say from the pulpit. His ignorant hearers, without being affected, would "wonder with a foolish face of praise," at his eloquence; whilst many who heard Mr. Benson deliver the truths contained in the above quotation, would be ready to exclaim, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed;" and add, "O God, the Father of heaven, have mercy upon us miserable sinners." Mr. Benson always aimed, and that in a legitimate way, to produce moral and religious effect; and hence, few, if any ministers of Christ, since the Apostolic age, have been favoured more than he, by manifest proofs that they did not labour in vain.

The ninth Discourse in the volume before us, is entitled, "The Life and Labours of the late REV. JOHN WESLEY." This sermon was preached before the Conference at Manchester, July 26, 1791, at their annual Meeting after his death. His text upon that memorable occasion was Heb. xiii. 7; "Remember those who have had the rule over

you, who have spoken unto you the word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.”

This discourse contains in proportion to its length, as just and descriptive an account of the great, learned, and venerable Founder of Methodism, as any that have appeared.

After mentioning several of the graces in which Mr. Wesley excelled, Mr. Benson says, “But however remarkable he might be for these graces, he was yet more eminent for *benevolence, mercy, and charity*. His life was *one continued good work, one constant labour* to do good to the bodies and souls of men. And as he fed thousands and myriads with the living bread, so also not a few with the bread that perisheth. Whatever he could spare from the profits of his Fellowship before his marriage, or from the income arising from the sale of his books afterwards, together with the donations occasionally made him by particular friends, was wholly distributed to the sick and needy. He was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame; a light (as it were) to them that sat in darkness, making the hearts of the fatherless and widows to sing for joy. His *generosity and liberality* according to his power, cannot be described, nor hardly conceived by those who did not know him.”

After mentioning how eminent Mr. Wesley was for the practice of self-denial, Mr. Benson adds: “In short, all the graces and virtues that adorn the Christian character, were more or less found in him, and that so mixed with much sweetness, affability, courtesy, and good-breeding, that he was the delight of every company he came into; nor was it possible, almost, for any one to be a few minutes present while he was conversing with his friends, in a free and familiar manner, without being at once edified and highly delighted. He had read and seen much, was so well acquainted with men and things, with the world and with the church, that he had an inexhaustible fund for entertaining and useful conversation; nor could any feast, how elegant and sumptuous soever, afford half the pleasure and delight which his enlivening and exhilarating discourse afforded.”

The character of Mr. Wesley, as a preacher, from the able pen of Mr. Benson, cannot fail to be acceptable to the religious public. “As a *preacher*,” says he, “he was always heard with deep attention, generally with much profit, and not seldom with surprising and wonderful effect.” “He was always *concise and clear*. He never advanced any thing *unnecessary or more than enough*, nor delivered himself in a manner that was not intelligible to the meanest of his hearers, if attentive. He was often *full* as well as *clear*, and to such as were intelligent, gave perfect satisfaction, upon almost every subject he undertook to explain. And his preaching was so *forcible and convincing*, that it was hardly possible to hear him attentively, without being as much displeased at one’s self, as one was pleased with the preacher.”

This is equally the language of a heart strongly imbued with benevolence, and that of a sound, discriminating judgment.

Of Mr. Wesley, as a writer, Mr. Benson says, "He employed his pen on almost all subjects that are useful to mankind, and treated them in a manner always agreeable, and often highly pleasing. His method was easy, natural, and exact. His style, though not laboured and flowery, (a kind of style he never admired,) yet was pure, perspicuous, and manly; much like that of Addison, universally acknowledged one of the most pleasing writers this or any nation has produced."

The limits prescribed us prohibit our quoting more largely from this excellent sermon, as well as from saying any more of the volume in which it is comprised, than that it merits general perusal.

Having cursorily noticed Mr. Benson's volume of sermons, we return with pleasure to the task of accompanying him in his public and private exertions to promote the interests of pure religion.

January 1, 1803, Mr. Benson thus expresses himself: "Being mercifully spared and preserved to see the beginning of this year, my mind has been humbled under a sense of my unworthiness, and of God's goodness, and, I hope, sincerely thankful for the Lord's mercies. I have endeavoured to devote myself afresh to his service, and trust it will continue to be my ruling desire to live to his praise and glory. May the Lord help me by his powerful and all-sufficient grace!"

Men generally, if not universally, find themselves capable of speaking with equal ease and perspicuity upon every subject with which they are well acquainted relating to this life. We seldom hear an able counsellor at the Bar, who has for any length of time been in the habit of pleading, complain of mental embarrassment while maintaining a cause he has taken in hand. But how frequently do we find that ministers of Christ, in the full possession of their physical and mental powers, have to lament that they are scarcely tolerable to themselves, at certain times, while treating from the pulpit the subjects with which they are best acquainted! On the 21st of January, Mr. Benson says: "Last night, at Lambeth, I was very much straitened indeed, although I spoke from the same subject which I was so assisted in preaching from on Monday evening last at Spitalfields." In this embarrassment, he acknowledges a gracious providence. "Thus the Lord shows us how little we can do without him. O that I may depend on him continually!"

On the 30th of January, Mr. Benson, after having preached at Lambeth-Marsh, and at Queen-Street, a sermon on account of the death of Mr. Edwards, says: "I did not find so much liberty either time, as I often do, which afterwards distressed me a good deal. For I have not yet learned to be so resigned as I ought to be in those cases. O that my will were more lost in the will of God!"

From the two last paragraphs, as well as from various other preceding parts of this work, it is evident that, high as Mr. Benson stood in the estimation of his brethren, and of the religious public as a Preacher, a part of the cross which he had to bear, consisted of the mortifying views he occasionally had of his public discourses. Ministers who consider themselves far inferior to him, in point of native talent, learning, piety, zeal, and qualifications for the pulpit, will hear these things and be encouraged. They will learn that Mr. Benson, justly famed for all that could recommend him as an ambassador of Christ, was a man of like passions with themselves; subject to similar sorrows and discouragements.

Mr. Benson, who was admirably qualified for the difficult task of preaching occasional sermons, delivered a discourse, in the forenoon of February 13, in aid of the Benevolent Society.

After mentioning, on the 26th of February, the places at which he had preached in the course of the four preceding days, Mr. Benson adds, "I have had much peace and comfort in my mind, and access to God in prayer with confidence. My mind has also been impressed with a solemn sense of the shortness and uncertainty of life, and the certainty and nearness of death, through many sudden deaths which I have heard of. Among the rest, that of Mr. Pine, of Bristol, of which Mr. Henry Moore has given me an account. On Wednesday, the 16th instant, in the evening, he was in the lobby of the old Room, where Mr. Gee, a Local Preacher, lately deceased, used to meet those who still adhered to the old plan of Methodism. Mr. Pine, after two or three had prayed, observed that they 'should not meet any longer in that way. Brother Gee was gone, and their number was small. Some,' said he, 'are safely lodged, and we who remain shall soon follow. You will observe the leadings of Providence, and strive to get good in the best way you can.' About three o'clock, next morning, Mrs. Pine awoke, and heard Mr. Pine sigh in rather an unusual manner. She arose and got a light, but he was gone."

On Saturday, March 19, Mr. Benson says: "In the evenings of this week, I have been engaged in meeting Classes at Queen-Street and Islington; and I have had much satisfaction in finding most of them in a flourishing state."

No man who is not a faithful pastor, can form an adequate idea of the satisfaction felt by Mr. Benson, on finding the souls of many under his care in a state of spiritual prosperity.

On the 3d of April he says: "I bless the Lord, this has been a remarkably good day. I was much assisted, and the congregation was much affected, while I explained and applied, Isa. liii. 10. The afternoon I spent alone, and in the evening preached at the City-Road Cha-

pel on Eph. ii. 8, 9. The congregation was large and attentive, and I was favoured with much liberty in speaking."

Mr. Benson, on the 26th of April, visited Mrs. K——, who had been recently afflicted. He mentions the happiness he felt on finding her much better, comfortable in her mind, and submissive to the Divine will. He spent the evening with the Rev. Mr. M——, with whose parents he was acquainted. "I was glad," says he, "to find him very serious, and I trust he is useful in preaching." This gentleman's elder brother, also a Clergyman, many years since, when his labours were chiefly confined to Bethesda Chapel, in Dublin, in an affectionate and well-written letter to Mr. Benson, acknowledged the important obligations which he was under to him at an early period of his religious course.

The high estimation in which Mr. Benson was held by the Methodists in London, appears from the Quarterly Meeting having resolved unanimously to petition Conference to appoint him a fourth year for their circuit, if not as Superintendent, and in a regular way, as a Supernumerary.

That petition is as follows:—

To the Methodist Conference.

"Hon. Fathers and Brethren,

"Permit us, the Stewards and Leaders of the London Society, to express our unanimous desire, that our highly-esteemed and much-respected Minister, Mr. Benson, may be continued with us another year; which, we conceive, he may be permitted to do, in consistency with the Rules of Conference; if in no other character, yet as a Supernumerary Preacher.

"Our reasons for desiring this are, that Mr. Benson has had peculiar influence in raising all our different branches of finance to a state they never equalled before, especially those of the Benevolent or Strangers' Friend Society and the Sunday Schools, which the Conference will allow to be of great importance, in a national point of view. And as these are but in their infancy, Mr. Benson's presence another year seems to be of great consequence, for their extension and establishment.

"It also appears to be the general wish of the people throughout the Circuits that he should stay; and, as our congregations are considerably increased, we hope that his labours for another year will be attended with much good. And further, the state of public affairs is so critical, that it may, perhaps, be necessary to publish to the world our sentiments and views; and, in that case, we think your permitting Mr. Benson to remain in London is a very desirable measure.

"We humbly presume, these considerations will induce Conference to accede to our request.

“Our prayer to God is, that your plans may be laid in wisdom, and tend to the furtherance of Christ’s kingdom.

“Signed by desire and in behalf of the Quarterly Meeting, June
30th, 1803,

“WILLIAM JERRAM.”

The Conference being held this year at Manchester, Mr. Benson arrived in that town on the 19th of July.

On the forenoon of July 31, after Dr. Coke had read prayers, Mr. Benson, at Oldham-Street Chapel, preached on the Atonement, from Heb. x. 4, to an amazingly crowded congregation. “I thank the Lord,” he observes, “I was peculiarly assisted; and, I believe, some hundreds found it a remarkably precious time.”

The subject of the books, especially the Magazine, was considered by the Conference on the 5th of August, when Mr. Benson was unanimously voted to be *sole Editor* of that periodical work. This office he continued to fill during the rest of his useful life. But while he filled that important office, and was no longer appointed to a Circuit, he neither ceased to preach, nor lost, in the smallest degree, the spirit of a true Christian pastor. The metropolis afforded an ample and delightful field for his ministerial labours. Yet he did not confine them to the metropolis, but made, as we shall have opportunities of noticing, excursions to various parts of the country, where, with the energy of a man of God, who was lavish of life for the purpose of turning many to righteousness, he preached to listening multitudes, the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Mr. Benson, during this Conference, preached at Stockport and Macclesfield, at which places he was hospitably entertained by his much-esteemed friends, Mr. Mayor and Mr. Yates. “The situation of Mr. Yates’s house,” he remarks, “is pleasant and romantic, at the foot of some sugar-loaf hills, covered with wood.”

Arrived at Derby in the forenoon of August 8, Mr. Benson, in whose heart the word of the Lord seems always to have burned, preached there to a crowded congregation, at seven in the evening. On the 10th, having arrived at home, he found that Mrs. Benson was far from being in a good state of health, and that his second daughter had, in his absence, been considerably afflicted. He observes, “May these trials of my faith and patience be sanctified, and answer their intended purpose!”

In the forenoon of the 28th of August, he preached at City-Road Chapel, for the benefit of the Sunday Schools. “My mind,” says he, “was much enlarged in speaking, and I hope many felt the power of the word.” At six in the evening, he preached at Snowfields, on Rev. xx. 12: but he was not favoured with so much liberty while treating that subject, as he had frequently been on former occasions. “Thus,”

he observes, "I am taught my dependence on God for every thing. I see I am not sufficient of myself to think any thing as of myself."

After preaching at Lambeth, in the forenoon of September 4, on Tit. iii. 3—7, Mr. Benson gave the congregation an interesting account of the conversion and happy death of Mrs. Booth, once a noted actress, of great comic powers and popularity. Of that account, the whole of which is too long for insertion, the following is a faithful abstract.

One night, after her return from the Theatre, the house in which she lodged was so suddenly consumed by fire, that it was with much difficulty she made her escape from the flames. Her exertions upon the occasion, joined to the agitation of her mind, brought on a fever, during the continuance of which, she was convinced that her mode of life was opposed to the spirit and practice of true religion. She left the stage, and sought for rest and peace; but, at first, in vain. She felt an aching void; and nothing she could do or enjoy afforded her the least degree of consolation.

Having retired to a village, where a Sunday School was established, she occasionally heard some of the teachers in it give an exhortation. By means of those pious men, under God, she soon discovered, that what she wanted to make her happy was a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, together with its concomitants, "pardon and peace and heavenly joy." She became a teacher of the poor children at the school in question, and was grateful to God for so subduing her proud heart, as to make her willing, in so humble a sphere, to make some good use of the talents, which she had so much abused.

After some time, she went to live with her daughter, near Lambeth-Marsh, and frequently heard preaching at the Methodist Chapel. It appears that she was soon enabled so to believe, as to be able to "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." She joined the Methodist Society, of which she continued a steady uniform member, adorning her Christian profession till the time of her dissolution. For some days previous to her removal from earth, death and glory were with her familiar and delightful subjects. She longed to depart, in order to be with Christ. She had an apprehension that her death would be sudden, and hence endeavoured to prepare the mind of her daughter for such an event. In effect, her death, though not alarmingly so, was sudden; for she attended preaching on Thursday evening, rather indisposed, and in the night of Sunday following, her soul was freed from the shackles of mortality.

"The congregation," says Mr. Benson, "was much affected, while I was speaking of her, and especially while I was endeavouring to improve an awful providence which happened within a few yards of the chapel the other night. This was a terrible fire, which broke out in Astley's Amphitheatre, a place where pantomimes were exhibited. It consumed

the whole in a few hours, and about twenty houses beside. A great number of families are stript of all, and reduced to entire beggary. Mrs. Smith, mother of Mrs. Astley, jun., was consumed in the flames. A ladder was raised to the window where she was, and she was seen to approach it; but, it seems, recollecting something she wished to save, she ran back, and when she was returning to the window, the floor of the room gave way, and she was seen to fall with it."

An account of the triumph of divine grace in the conversion and happy death of an actress, deserves a place in the Life of Mr. Benson, who so long, so powerfully, and so successfully besought, not only sinners of *every description*, but *all* sinners without *exception*, to accept of proffered mercy.

William Hales, D. D., Rector of Killesandra, in Ireland, having published a Pamphlet entitled, "Methodism Inspected," and the Editors of the Christian Observer having, in a review of that work, said some things which Mr. Benson considered worthy of censure; toward the close of this year, he published a Pamphlet entitled, "The Inspector of Methodism Inspected, and the Christian Observer Observed."

Before we notice this Pamphlet, which consists of eighty pages, octavo, it may be proper to make a few observations. Mr. Benson, though frequently engaged in controversy, never, without reluctance, entered the polemical field, unless to contend for the essentials of true religion. But of all the periodical works, in which the grand doctrines of Christianity are advocated, he appears to have been least disposed to animadvert upon any article contained in the Christian Observer. Had we no other evidence (but we have many) of the truth of this observation, we should judge ourselves warranted in making it, from what is contained in the first paragraph of "The Inspector of Methodism Inspected," &c. Addressing himself to the Editors of that able, temperate, and evangelical Publication, he says:

"GENTLEMEN,—I have been a constant reader of the *Christian Observer*, from its first publication, and acknowledge that I have received much pleasure and profit from the perusal of that Periodical Work. Most of the pieces inserted in it, have appeared to me worthy of commendation for their *truth* and *importance*, and but few to merit censure. The moderation which you have manifested on the subjects of controversy, between those that believe the doctrine of *General*, and those who hold that of *Particular* Redemption, with your constant care to guard your Readers against *Antinomianism* and *false-liberty* on the one hand, and *self-righteousness* and *formality* on the other, has met with my most decided approbation. I have especially much approved of the impartial manner in which several books have been reviewed in your work." Mr. Benson, after mentioning several reviews in that performance, which obtained his unqualified approbation, adds: "I have,

indeed, had such a high opinion of your judgment in this particular, that if you commended a book, it was, with me, a sufficient testimony in its favour; and on this ground I have recommended sundry publications thus approved, and at the same time have taken occasion to promote in different parts of the kingdom, the circulation of the *Christian Observer*, as a work well calculated to serve the interests of genuine religion and virtue."

Dr. Hales, who seems to have had no more than a very partial and incorrect knowledge of the doctrines and discipline of the Methodists, severely censured their Missionaries in Ireland, on account of some of the doctrines they inculcated, and the measures they adopted, for the purpose of spreading pure religion amongst the poor deluded Papists of that country.

It is foreign from our purpose, in noticing Mr. Benson's "Inspector Inspected," &c., to enter into the few points at issue betwixt him and the *Christian Observer*; points which, though, in our apprehension, of some, are not of *vital* importance; and hence it may be sufficient to add, that in this, as in his other Defences of Methodism, he was successful. And with respect to Dr. Hales, it is not too much to say, that his knowledge of Scriptural Theology does not bear as much proportion to that possessed by Mr. Benson, as the physical strength of an infant does to that of a giant.

The 19th of October being appointed by Government to be observed as a day of general humiliation, fasting, and prayer, Mr. Benson preached in the morning at the City-Road Chapel, on Isa. xxvi. 20, 21; and in the evening at Great Queen-Street, on 2 Pet. iii. 15.

To persons who have but partial and incorrect views of the spirituality and extent of the divine law, and consequently of the impossibility of being, in the first instance, justified by its deeds, or, being justified by grace, of afterwards continuing in that state by obedience to the law, it will appear matter of surprise, that Mr. Benson, a man of such eminent holiness, should, at the end of this year, see cause to be deeply humbled, on account of what he terms sins and failings. But by those who are men in understanding, and whose spiritual senses are exercised, his meaning will be readily understood, nor will they abuse it to Antinomian purposes.

December 31, he says: "Upon looking back on the events and providential dispensations of the past year, and on my many sins and failings, I find great cause to be both humble and thankful. O that I may be enabled to devote myself more fully to the Lord and his service than ever I have done!"

The following is Mr. Benson's account of how he was employed on Sunday, January 1, 1804.—"In the morning at Spitalfields, I discoursed with much liberty on Ps. xc. 12. The congregation was

affected, and I was so myself. In the afternoon we had a very solemn time in renewing our covenant with God. I found my mind under a sweet influence of grace, and many seemed to partake of the same blessed unction. In the evening at six, I preached again at Spitalfields, and was favoured with much liberty, while I explained and applied Rom. xiii. 11."

Upon the immateriality, and what some judge consequent immortality of the human soul, much has been said and written by numbers, but scarcely, if ever, by any, better than by Drew, in his celebrated Essay upon the subject. But to what do all their reasonings amount? To no more than strong probability. Not to philosophy, or metaphysical reasoning, or both together, but to Divine Revelation, we are indebted for certainty on the doctrine in question. For admitting that the soul is immaterial, and consequently does not contain in itself a single principle of decay or dissolution, it does not follow, that at some future period it might not, by an act of Omnipotence, be annihilated. But let us hear Mr. Benson on this subject. Under date January 29, he says: "I have employed some time this week in perusing Drew's book upon the soul. The reasoning is close, and in general apparently conclusive. But two great difficulties stand in the way. 1. Have we not our souls by traduction? and if so, are they *necessarily immaterial* and *immortal*, and incapable of dying? Does not their immortality depend on the sovereign will and pleasure of God? 2. Have not the brutes *perception*, *memory*, *a will*, and *passions*? Have they, therefore, in them an immaterial and immortal spirit? The declarations of Scripture are of more weight with me, than any philosophical or abstract reasoning I ever saw on the subject."

Having engaged to preach a sermon on the occasion of the death of Dr. Whitehead, who had been interred on the 4th of March, Mr. Benson employed a part of three days in preparing materials for it, and in digesting them in proper order. "In the evening," he says, "wet as it was, the congregation was crowded at the City-Road Chapel, to hear Dr. Whitehead's funeral sermon; and I was enabled to speak with clearness, and, I trust, with some good effect, from 2 Cor. v. 8. I then gave a pretty large account of the Doctor's life and character. I added, from my own knowledge of him, a short account of his character, as a Man—as a Scholar—a Divine—a Preacher—a Friend—a Member of civil society—and as a Christian. I trust the discourse and account delivered gave satisfaction to the numerous auditory. They heard with deep attention, and were silent as death; and I hope that the word spoken had its desired effect upon many. May the Lord make it a lasting blessing!"

That Dr. Whitehead stood high in the estimation of Mr. Wesley, who

knew him well and long, appears from the following sentence contained in his will:—

“I give all my manuscripts to Thomas Coke, Dr. Whitehead, and Henry Moore, to be burnt or published as they see good.”

Few men, in any age of the Church, were more opposed to a sectarian spirit than Mr. Benson. One proof, out of many which might be adduced, of his truly catholic spirit, occurs under date April 9, where he says, “This evening I took Mr. H——, a Dissenting Minister, with me to Queen-Street, and heard him preach a useful sermon there on 1 John i. 8, 9. I hope the people were edified.”

It is evident that, through the whole of Mr. Benson’s ministerial and literary career, he never at any time considered the points in controversy betwixt the advocates for, and the opponents of, General Redemption, as *necessarily* affecting either the foundation or superstructure of true religion. Hence his unwillingness to enter into a controversy with the conductors of any periodical work, in which the essential doctrines of Christianity, with their practical uses, are maintained.

We were led to make these observations, by perusing the following paragraph in Mr. Benson’s Journal:—

“May 2. A very unfair ‘Account of *Arminianism*’ having been inserted in the Evangelical Magazine for May, I this day wrote to the Editor of that Publication, and sent him for insertion a very different, and, I think, very just account of that doctrine, taken from Gerard Brandt’s History of the Synod of Dort. I have told him that I should be sorry to see the dying embers of controversy revived, or the two periodical publications, the Evangelical and Methodist Magazines, made vehicles of strife and contention; yet, that if such articles are inserted in the Evangelical Magazine, as that here referred to, controversy is inevitable, as we neither distrust the goodness of our cause, nor fear the want of materials for its defence.”

This is equally the language of sense, piety, prudence, and fortitude.

May 25, being a day appointed by Government for a National Fast, Mr. Benson, who invariably demonstrated himself a loyal and loving subject, preached in the morning at Queen-Street, on Matt. vi. 16, and in the evening at Snowsfields, on Joel ii. 13. “In the morning,” says he, “I did not find much liberty in speaking; but, in the evening, I was much assisted, and I trust the congregation was edified.” He then proceeds to observe, that as the people’s fears from the French had, in a great degree, subsided, they were but little disposed to perform the duties of prayer and fasting.

For some days previous to the 16th of June, he was chiefly employed in preparing a part of Mr. Fletcher’s Life for the press. This employment he found to be peculiarly profitable. “It has,” says he, “brought

past events, past trials, and past deliverances, to my remembrance, and has furnished me with fresh motives for gratitude and joy, as also to watchfulness, prayer, and ardour in pursuit of that holiness of which Mr. Fletcher set so bright an example."

Mr. Benson, at the request of Mrs. Fletcher, seconded by that of the Methodist Conference, held at Leeds, in the year 1801, published the *Life of the Rev. JOHN FLETCHER*. Neither Mr. Wesley's Narrative of that extraordinary man, nor the account of his death and character written by Mrs. Fletcher, nor what the Rev. Mr. Gilpin said in his *Notes on the Portrait of St. Paul*, nor all those together, prevented the religious public from desiring to see a full account of a man so justly famed for every virtue calculated to adorn the Christian ministry. All those accounts, though deservedly esteemed, did not furnish the reader with a full and connected history of that great and good man. This task was reserved for Mr. Benson; a task which he performed so ably and judiciously as to entitle him to the thanks of the best judges of religious biography. His long and intimate acquaintance with Mr. Fletcher, in addition to his acknowledged talents, qualified him for the arduous undertaking.

In 1812, a third edition of the work was published. In his preface to the second edition, the author briefly notices some slight animadversions, mixed with a considerable degree of praise, found in some respectable periodical publications; and an appendix to the second edition of the work contains a satisfactory reply to some objections to it, inserted in the *Christian Observer*.

The third edition contains, including the prefaces, upwards of 400 octavo pages. The main body of the work is confessedly a compilation from accounts of the subject of it which had previously appeared; but this does not detract from its value. The Editors of the *Theological and Biblical Magazine* say, in their Number for April, 1805, of the *Life* in question, "We, amongst others, differ widely from Mr. Fletcher in some points of doctrine; but we cannot withhold our admiration of a character so truly lovely and exalted. Mr. Benson has performed his part, in collecting the materials for this *Life of Mr. Fletcher*, in a very respectable manner."

The Authors of the *Eclectic Review*, in their Number for June, 1805, say, among other things, of Mr. Fletcher, "In whatever period he had lived, to whatever department of Christians he had belonged, he would have shone in the religious hemisphere as a star of the first magnitude." Those gentlemen, after mentioning a few passages, by the omission of which they conceived the volume might be improved, as well as by the insertion of an account of Mr. Fletcher, as a tutor and a writer, add, "We can cordially recommend it, in its present state, to serious and candid Christians, of every variety of form and sentiment; and it would

greatly surprise us, should any person of this description rise up from the perusal of it, and assert that it had not afforded him pleasure and profit."

In short, Mr. Benson's Life of Mr. Fletcher, on account of its execution as well as of its subject, deserves to be transmitted to the latest posterity.

Having, as Representative of the Missionaries, in Dr. Coke's absence, attended at the Committee for stationing the Preachers, Mr. Benson, on the 28th of July, says, "I thank God, our business was conducted with great love and harmony. The brethren, seem, in general, in a good spirit, and to be impressed with the fear and love of God."

On the morning of July 30, the General Conference commenced at City-Road, London, when Mr. Henry Moore was chosen President, and Dr. Coke, Secretary.

Mr. Benson's great mental powers, learning, and general knowledge, did not cause him to be a captious hearer of any of his brethren; nay, all those endowments, being sanctified to him, enabled him to hear to edification. August 1, he says, "Last night Mr. Averell preached a useful sermon, on Rev. ii. 4; and to-night, Mr. Stephens preached admirably on James v. 19, 20."

This eulogy, though justly merited, detracts nothing from the value of that goodness of heart from which it proceeded. Mr. Benson seldom or never neutralized his praise by qualifying epithets.

In the talents afforded to his ministering servants, by the Great Head of the Church, there is found an amazing disparity. How great, in point of acquired, if not natural, abilities, is the difference betwixt a Preacher who is barely tolerable, and one who, well acquainted with every part of divinity, brings out of his treasure things new as well as old, and who is equally qualified to inform and persuade. But if none, save characters of this description, were suffered to officiate as Ministers of Christ, the pastoral care would devolve upon extremely few, and the great mass of the people would be left as sheep without a shepherd. Meantime, though we know that God often effects great things in his church by means of weak, and what many would deem unfit, instruments, yet, weak as those instruments are, and ignorant of many things, the knowledge of which some think an essential qualification for the sacred office; they are not ignorant of the leading truths of Christianity. Though they never speak elegantly, nor, for any length of time, correctly, they inculcate, in a plain and clear manner, all the essential truths of our holy religion. Men of this humble description, filled with divine love and truly Christian zeal, are abundantly better qualified for the work of the ministry than men of the greatest talents, if defective in either love or zeal. But still, there are essential qualifications, in point of knowledge, utterance, &c. without which, no man, whatever may be

his zeal, ought to be authorized by a Bishop, Synod, or Conference, to labour in the Lord's harvest. Mr. Benson, who was the very reverse of a fastidious hearer, exerted himself, about this time, to prevent an unqualified person from being sent out as a Missionary. This we learn from the following paragraph in his Journal :—

“August 15. A person, from the ——— Circuit, having been recommended as a Missionary, and appointed for Nova Scotia, a few of us, with Dr. Coke, examined him this morning, respecting his knowledge of divine things ; and, in the evening, Dr. Coke, Mr. Taylor, and I, heard him preach at Snowsfields, when we were all thoroughly satisfied that he is utterly unfit to be sent out at present. We have, therefore, concluded to send him home again, to stay till he shall gain more knowledge of what he should teach others, and till his gift for speaking in public be a little more improved. I am very thankful that I have got this accomplished.”

On the 9th of October, there appeared an advertisement in the London Gazette, signed *Havokesbury*, stating that a threatening letter was sent to Lord Aylesbury, in August, containing the most scurrilous language and threats against his life, and put into the post-office at Newbury. His late gracious Majesty, on having the case represented to him, offered a pardon to any accomplice who would make a discovery ; and Lord Aylesbury offered a reward of £100. It was stated, that the letter in question was sent in consequence of his Lordship's objecting to the building of a Methodist Chapel at Bedwin, and signed by one who styled himself “A firm Believer.” “On this account,” says Mr. Benson, “Mr. Vipond and our friends in the Newbury Circuit are under great concern, lest, through this wicked letter, the cause of God should be brought under reproach in that neighbourhood. I have advised them to print and circulate hand-bills, offering a further reward for a discovery, and to advertise it in the Reading Paper.” This was the most judicious advice that could be given upon the subject.

On the 15th of December, Mr. Benson arrived at Nottingham, where he was most cordially welcomed by both the Preachers and people. “I pray God,” says he, “that my coming may be attended with a blessing, and that I may have no cause to lament that I have run in vain.” In the forenoon of the day following, the Methodist Chapel in that town, which had been some time before enlarged, was filled ; but, in the evening, some hundreds, who hoped to have the pleasure of hearing Mr. Benson, were, for want of room, disappointed. “I thank God,” he observes, “I was much assisted in preaching both times, but especially in the morning, when the congregation in general were much impressed.”

At half past ten in the forenoon of December 25, Mr. Benson preached at Nottingham, with much enlargement of heart and liberty of expression, on 1 Tim. i. 15. Upon that occasion, the word delivered was,

indeed, as a hammer and a fire to break the rocky hearts of sinners. Many were much affected; and one man, who cried out in deep distress, professed to have received the remission of his sins before he left the chapel.

Having taken leave of his very affectionate friends at Nottingham, on the 26th of December, Mr. Benson set out, in company with a friend, for Bingham; notice having been given for his preaching in that place, in the afternoon. There, notwithstanding the great severity of the day, he had the pleasure of preaching to a crowded audience, who appeared not only to *understand*, but also to *feel* the importance of the truths he delivered. He arrived in time at Newark to preach at seven in the evening. The chapel was well filled, and all were very attentive while he explained "Other foundation can no man lay," &c. Many had come ten, twelve, and some even fourteen miles, and had to return home after preaching.

Notice having been given for him to preach at Grantham, on the 27th of December, he arrived at that town about two o'clock in the afternoon. After dinner, he enjoyed what never failed to be to him a pleasing and profitable luxury,—the happiness of being alone for about two hours. In the evening, he preached to what he calls "a pretty large congregation, considering the place." Many came from the country, although the ground was covered thick with snow. He remarks, "All seemed to listen with attention while I explained and applied our Lord's question to Peter, 'Lovest thou me?'"

At the earnest request of the Leaders, Stewards, and other friends at Newark, Mr. Benson consented to preach, in aid of their Benevolent Society. On the 31st of December he set off for Grantham, where, on his arrival, he received £20 from the Rev. Mr. Dodwell, for the support of the Methodist Missions. In the evening, he preached to a large congregation, several of whom came five, six, and some even fourteen miles. "My mind," says he, "was much at liberty in preaching, and a door of utterance was opened to me, and I believe the word was attended with a blessing."

On the 1st of January, 1805, after his pleasing and profitable excursion to the country, Mr. Benson arrived in London, where he had the comfort of finding, as he expresses it, his family as well as he expected.

On the 5th of January, he says, "The four last days I have spent chiefly in providing and correcting materials for the March and April Magazines, and correcting the press for other works. I have enjoyed peace and comfort, and it has been my earnest desire to begin this year with God, as I have endeavoured to begin many."

The principle which leads us to embrace every opportunity that offers to advocate the cause of our venerable Established Church, cannot prevent our regretting the levity manifested in several Cathedrals, by some

of the choristers. This subject is touched upon by Mr. Benson, under date the 24th of January.—“In Canterbury I walked to the Cathedral, where I found a most miserable reader of prayers, and a few wicked boys in surplices, employed occasionally in what is termed chanting, profaning, in a most shocking manner, the worship of God. However, the congregation was not large to receive any harm thereby. One old man and one old woman were all I saw, save the few friends who went with me.”

Having thus censured such levity as is intolerable in any place of divine worship, Mr. Benson adds, “I was surprised to find this Cathedral, belonging to the See of Canterbury, under the Metropolitan of all England, so much inferior, not only to York Minster, but even to those of Beverley and Lincoln, in beauty and symmetry.”

In the Liturgy, Articles, and Homilies, of the Church of England, the doctrines and precepts of Christianity are clearly stated, and judiciously maintained; and therefore, it is matter of surprise, that any Ministers, within her pale, should be found doctrinal Antinomians. But some such there have been, and possibly are at present. One of this description Mr. Benson heard in London, on the evening of May 7. “Having understood that Dr. — was in town, and was much followed wherever he preached, I went this evening to hear him in one of the churches in the city. There was, indeed, a crowded congregation. But what a sermon! The text, which was Ezek. xvi. 14, was totally misapplied and explained of Christ’s imputed righteousness; the doctrine was false: and the method a mere farrago and jumble of inconsistencies! I see now what some professors in London run after. It is imputed righteousness in the Antinomian sense, or abused to Antinomianism! Practical preaching they cannot away with. However, whether men will hear or forbear, we must speak the truth as it is in Jesus.”

In the forenoon of May 8, Mr. Benson heard the late Dr. Williams, of Rotherham, a learned and pious man, preach a missionary sermon at Mr. Rowland Hill’s chapel. “The congregation,” he says, “was large and crowded, and he gave us a sensible and judicious sermon on Christian zeal; but this was from Rom. ix. 3, a text very unsuitable to such an occasion, and the explication he gave appears to me not the true one. By being ‘accursed from Christ’ he understood being ‘separated and excommunicated from the Christian church,’ if that would have saved his brethren according to the flesh. But it seems to me, that *απο της Χριστη* should rather be rendered ‘after the example of Christ;’ and then the meaning will be, ‘I could wish myself accursed, or made a curse, or crucified, after the example of Christ, for my kinsmen,’ &c.”

Professors of piety, in proportion to their ceasing to live and walk in the Spirit, generally become a source of vexation to each other, and by their mutual contentions, largely contribute towards prejudicing the

minds of those who know not God, against the essential truth of Christianity. The primitive Christians were a proverb of love, as well as of reproach. It seems that several professors at ———, were far from being distinguished for brotherly kindness, when on the 12th of May, Mr. Benson observes, "I was surprised and grieved to see the congregation much less than it used to be on a Sunday evening. This was partly owing to quarrels amongst some of the members of the Society there." And under date September 22, he says, "The strife and contention among the little Society, in this place, have cast a great damp upon the work and been a stumbling-block in the way of the outward hearers; so that the congregation is much lessened."

Such professors of religion as are children of contention, scatter firebrands, arrows, and death, notwithstanding all their pretensions to zeal and piety. Even one sinner of their description does an infinity of mischief.

Having come to Sheffield, at the request of the Society, Leaders, Trustees, &c. to open their large new chapel, Mr. Benson preached in it on both the forenoon and evening of the 21st of July, to most crowded congregations. Speaking of that chapel, he says: "I think it is the best contrived in the Methodist Connexion; and, except the City-Road Chapel, and the Oldham-Street Chapel in Manchester, it is the largest we have any where. I trust the erection of it will be attended with a blessing to many souls."

Mr. Benson preached at the chapel in Norfolk-Street, Sheffield, in the evening of July 22, on Luke viii. 18, "Take heed how ye hear," &c. He chose this subject, in preference to any other, for the purpose of directing those whom he addressed, to hear with profit the many sermons which would be preached during the course of the approaching Conference.

On the night of August 9, the Conference at Sheffield closed in peace and harmony.

Mr. Benson having taken leave of his friends at Sheffield, on the 11th of August, proceeded, in company with Mr. George Smith, to Chesterfield, where he preached in the afternoon and evening. At Nottingham, on the evening of the following day, he observes, "I was much assisted in explaining and enforcing 'So run that ye may obtain.'"

On the 15th of August he arrived in London, after being absent from it for a month.

That all pretensions to piety without practical religion, which implies inward and outward holiness, are founded in delusion, every one competently acquainted with Scriptural Divinity, will readily admit. And yet how much practical Antinomianism is discoverable in the tempers and conduct of many who conclude themselves to be genuine Christians! Of this Mr. Benson was sensible; and hence, on the 20th of September,

says, "Judging that practical religion is much too little regarded by many of the congregation, and even of the Society, I enforced, this forenoon, at City-Road Chapel, 'Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say.' " He then adds: "My heart was enlarged, and my mouth opened, and I was enabled to speak strong words, perhaps stronger than some could bear. But surely there is much cause for plain dealing."

Practical preaching, such as Mr. Benson's, in strict consistency with evangelical principles, is equally calculated to prevent Antinomianism on the one hand, and Pharisaism on the other. While we maintain, that by grace we are saved through faith, we must never lower the tone of religious precept, nor forget, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

In the forenoon of December 22, Mr. Benson observes that he was peculiarly assisted while discoursing on the subject of our Lord's transfiguration. "A manifestly divine influence," he remarks, "attended the word spoken; and, I trust, some will show by their conduct that it was not spoken in vain." In the evening, to a very crowded congregation, at Queen-Street, he preached a sermon for the benefit of the Sunday Schools.

Readers of sense and piety will know how to appreciate the sentiments contained in the following paragraph. It occurs under date January 2, 1806.

"Reflecting of late on the many mercies of the last year, particularly in the restoration of my son John to health, who, in the beginning of the year was much afflicted, and in the preservation and partial restoration of my wife, I see that I have infinite reason to thank God for these and all his other mercies; and I have endeavoured to give myself up anew to his service. I bless his holy name, I find it in some measure my meat and drink to do his will: and I trust I shall be enabled to live this year more than ever to his glory."

That men may be noted for loyalty, as Mr. Benson was, without approving of every measure adopted and acted upon by the administration, is apparent from the contents of the following paragraph in Mr. Benson's Journal. "Jan. 25. On Thursday last we received intelligence of the death of that eminent statesman, Mr. Pitt. In one respect his sun has gone down in a cloud. The amazing success of Bonaparte against Austria and the Russians, and the terrible disasters the Allies have suffered, show that he pursued a wrong plan for the country, and for all Europe, in rekindling this war on the Continent, and urging the Emperor of Germany and the Emperor of Russia to come forward at this time to oppose the French."

After thus giving his opinion, in which nodoubt, many loyal, great, and good men coincided, he adds, with much piety and judgment;

“However, God is accomplishing his own designs, and by the clashing and contending interests and passions of men, is overthrowing the *man of sin*.”

The Right Honourable WILLIAM PITT, cursorily mentioned, whose history will be read with interest by the latest posterity, was by his extraordinary natural and acquired abilities, in addition to his loyalty and fortitude, admirably calculated to manage the helm of State during the stormy period of the early stages of the French Revolution ; when many, in this country, dazzled by the deceitful glare of that astonishing event, imagined, though in the possession of perfect civil and religious liberty, that they were in a state of political bondage.

On the 2d of March, Mr. Benson preached in the evening to a crowded congregation, at the City-Road Chapel, a sermon on the occasion of the death of Mr. Teulon, a very upright, peaceable, and exemplary man. In illustration of one part of his subject, he read a few lines of a letter from Mr. Pawson, then on the borders of the heavenly world. Great was his suffering, but still greater his consolation. Under date March 11, he says ; “Yesterday we learned that Mr. Pawson departed this life on Wednesday last, at Wakefield. Amidst his very great and complicated afflictions, he was enabled to triumph continually in the hope of a glorious immortality. He has, indeed, left a blessed testimony behind him. May we follow him as he followed Christ !”

This eminently holy and extensively useful minister, became an itinerant Preacher amongst the Methodists in the year 1762. His talents for the pulpit were respectable. He adorned, through every stage of his religious course his Christian profession.

Surely, many thousands of the inhabitants of London are, in point of beneficence, as well as in other respects, patterns worthy of universal imitation ! In the forenoon of May 11, Mr. Benson preached a sermon at City Road, and one in the evening at Queen-Street, in aid of a Society established in London in the year 1785, for the support and encouragement of Sunday Schools, in the different counties in England and Wales. “Since their establishment,” says he, “they had assisted with books or money 2542 Schools, at which had been educated 226,945 Scholars. They had given away 219,410 Spelling-books ; 50,126 Testaments ; and 7,213 Bibles ; and to such Schools as stood in need of pecuniary assistance, the sum of £4147. 8s. 5d.”

On the forenoon of May 18, Mr. Benson, at Queen-Street Chapel, conceived himself more unprepared for preaching than usual ; but he says, “I lifted up my heart to God, and he graciously answered me ; and I was peculiarly aided in discoursing on 1 Pet. i. 6, 7.” Of his discourse on this passage he gives the following outlines :—“ 1. The reasons which the people of God have to rejoice : 2. The reasons they have for sorrow : 3. That the reasons they have to rejoice, far overbalance the other, and

that the reasons they have for sorrowing, when properly understood and improved, become even reasons for joy." Many of the people, he informs us, were much affected upon the occasion.

In the evening, after having preached at Queen-Street, in meeting the Society, he says: "I gave them an account of Mr. Edward Jackson, who died about ten days ago unexpectedly, but in great peace and triumph, at Burslem. I knew him about thirty-four years, and have reason to believe he was an Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile. He heard brother W. E. Miller preach on the Monday evening. On Tuesday morning, being very ill, he sent for him, and said, 'Brother Miller, you have sometimes expressed some fears respecting the pain of dying; but O fear not,—trust God; he can support; he does support; glory,—glory be to his holy name!'"

That the 1st of June was to Mr. Benson a day of great labour appears from his having preached twice at Lambeth, and given tickets to upwards of two hundred members of the Society. "I bless God, however," says he "I was not at all weary. O that I could continue to use the health the Lord gives me, more and more to his glory. The congregation was much crowded both times; and I thank the Lord, I was enabled to speak with a measure of liberty."

Mr. Benson, on the evening of 15th of June, preached a sermon at City-Road Chapel, to a crowded congregation, on occasion of the death of Mr. Rutherford, "a man of God," who, through sickness, had been unable to preach for two years. His text was Rev. ii. 10, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." The congregation was much affected, particularly with the account of his decease. "He died," says Mr. Benson, "as he lived, in the Lord; and testified that he found the doctrine he had preached, sufficient to support him in a dying hour."

Under date July 17, Mr. Benson says, "I was much assisted in explaining, at Hoxton, Rom. viii. 31—39. I saw more clearly than ever I did in my life, that when the Apostle says, 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?' he does not mean Christ's love to us, but our love to Christ, caused by his love to us. Shall tribulation, &c. make us love Christ less than we have done? Shall we, through fear of tribulation, persecution, &c., turn our back on Christ and his Gospel?" This seems to be the genuine meaning of the passage.

Mr. Benson preached at Nottingham and Sheffield on his way to Leeds, where he arrived on July 22d.

At Bramley, on the morning of July 27, the congregation was much impressed while he explained and applied the passage which contains an account of Christ's transfiguration. After dining at Mr. Fawcett's, Jun., in company with several friends, at Bradford, he preached to a vast concourse of people, on the subject of the New-Birth. "We had," says he,

“a most attentive congregation, and a comfortable opportunity.” Having preached three times in the course of the day, and perspired very much, he was so indisposed as to be unable to sleep any during the night; and yet on the evening of the next day, he preached at Leeds, when almost the whole of the Preachers who had come to the Conference, availed themselves of the opportunity of hearing him. “The Lord,” says he, “assisted me; and although the chapel was exceedingly crowded, and almost all the Preachers present, I have been enabled to preach with much liberty, and, I hope, with good effect, on Rev. ii. 10.”

On the morning of the 28th of July, the Conference began, when Dr. Clarke was chosen President, and Dr. Coke, Secretary. Of this Conference, which concluded on the 9th of August, Mr. Benson says, “It has been very peaceable and harmonious.”

He spent Sunday, the 10th of August, at York, where he preached three times, and with much comfort. In the evening he was “especially assisted, when the chapel was much crowded, and the whole congregation exceedingly attentive.” At seven in the evening of August 11, having preached at Pontefract, at Mrs. Benson’s earnest request he remained the day following at Knottingly, being her native place. Here, such crowds flocked to attend his word, that many could not get nigh the door of the chapel. “I was,” he remarks, “much assisted in preaching; and I hope the word will not fall to the ground.”

Accompanied by Mrs. Benson, he proceeded on the 13th of August, to Newark, where he preached again with comfort, to a large and attentive congregation.

Having spent some time in viewing a steam engine, and the machinery of a linen manufactory, on August 14, Mr. Benson says: “It is indeed an astonishing display of the skill and ingenuity of man, and shows how much a finite mind may effect by long and unremitting attention. And what then may not the infinite mind of God effect? What wonder that he should build the universe! and much more should raise out of the dust the machine of a vegetable or animal body! But herein his works differ essentially and infinitely from those of man;—God’s machines propagate their own species.”

After travelling the whole of the night of August 14, Mr. and Mrs. Benson arrived safe in London, early in the afternoon of the day following, both grateful for the care and goodness of God to them.

Many instances occur, in Mr. Benson’s Journal, of his manifesting true goodness of heart and love to his brethren in the ministry, by speaking of their discourses in strong terms of approbation. For instance, under date August 17, he says: “In the morning I read prayers at Queen-Street, and afterwards heard Mr. M——, one of the young preachers appointed for this circuit. I was, indeed, much pleased with his discourse, and quite surprised that he could preach so well.”

The week preceding Sunday, August 24, he had been much engaged in correcting the Minutes of Conference, the Magazine, and other publications. On the morning of that day he preached at City-Road Chapel, to a very large congregation on the Epistle for the day, concerning the glory of the Gospel in preference to that of the Law. The people listened with deep attention. At Snowsfields in the evening, after preaching to a large congregation, he met the Society, and gave them some account of the preceding Conference.

Accompanied by a friend, he arrived at Maidstone on the evening of October 11, where he preached three times the day following. Remaining there on the 13th, he preached in the evening, on 2 Pet. iii. 14. He says, "We had a solemn, and, I hope, a profitable time."

Returned to London, after his excursion to the country, during the course of which he laboured, as usual, diligently in the word and doctrine, we learn that on the morning of October 19, he discoursed with much freedom and comfort at Spitalfields. His subject was 2 Pet. i. 4; and he showed, at large, the excellency of the promises of God, and the end for which they are given to us.

The London Circuit has always been, taking every thing into the account, a very laborious one, though considerably more so before, than since it has been divided into several. What a day of labour does Mr. Benson describe, on the 26th of October! "Having walked to Chelsea and back, and a mile at least to dinner, in all about *thirteen* miles, I have found myself rather weary on my return home. However, I have had a comfortable day, having been assisted in preaching, and the congregations being, both times, large and attentive. We made a collection for their Benevolent Society, which is yet in its infancy."

Mr. Benson, feelingly alive to the interests of his country, and those of her allies, was sorry to have to record the following disastrous account on the 28th of October.

"Intelligence, but too well authenticated, has arrived in town this day, concerning a very bloody battle fought on the 14th between the Prussians and the French, 150,000 troops at least being on each side. The conflict, it appears, lasted from three o'clock in the morning till five in the evening, and was maintained a great part of the time with the bayonet, with great obstinacy on both sides. Bonaparte then bringing 10,000 fresh troops, the Prussians were compelled to give way, and victory declared in favour of the French. The slaughter, it appears, has been dreadful, thirty or even forty thousand being killed on each side. The King of Prussia has retreated to Magdeburg, and Bonaparte is marching forward to Berlin. These are, indeed, most awful times for Europe." They were indeed most awful times; but the French had not then run the whole length of their revolutionary career, through every part of which, they were a scourge to one or more of the European nations. In-

toxicated with success, and apparently grasping at universal empire; their great military leader, several years after, at the head of an army of nearly 500,000 men, partly composed of soldiers of several nations, proceeded to Moscow, where his hopes of subduing Russia were unexpectedly blasted; and both himself and his Marshals learned, shortly after, from woeful experience, that they were far from invincible. They were visited with one disaster after another, until, being thoroughly humbled, the wiser part of them were not only willing, but glad to be governed by their legitimate Sovereign; and such of them as were of a contrary description, found it impossible to offer any effectual resistance.

God, who alone is able to calm the raging seas, and still the madness of the people, so overruled the storms and tempests, and the ten thousand miseries consequent on the French Revolution, as to teach, by their instrumentality, both Kings and subjects, a variety of salutary lessons; as well as to lay a foundation for the lasting peace of Europe.

At Twickenham, where Mr. Benson met a Class at two o'clock in the afternoon of November 9, he says: "I had the comfort of finding three persons in it, pious and steady, who had been awakened under a discourse delivered by me six years before, at the opening of the chapel there. I was also informed of another who was brought to the Lord, under my preaching that day, and who continues to adorn the Gospel."

The following reflections by Mr. Benson, upon the facts just now related, will, we doubt not, be duly appreciated.

"I do not remember an instance of so many being brought to true repentance in so small a congregation (for I think we had not above two hundred hearers) under one or two of my sermons. I fear I have frequently preached to two or three thousand hearers, when not so many as one or two have received any deep and lasting impressions. Thus we may sometimes be instrumental of doing great good, when we do not expect it, and may sometimes do none, when we think we are doing a great deal."

These observations are calculated to encourage such faithful Ministers of Christ as, for a time, see little or no fruit of their labour. The pious and judicious MATTHEW HENRY, whose praise is in all the churches, lamented that, after the first seven years of his labours at Chester, he had not the happiness of witnessing many seals to his ministry. This he assigned as one reason why he accepted an invitation to take the charge of a congregation at Hackney. The members of his little church at Chester parted with him very reluctantly. They had long known how to set a due estimate upon his life and labours. He loved them with a truly pastoral love, and engaged, with the consent of his new charge, to spend a month with them every year. In a part of his diary, after mentioning them with affection, he reproached himself for not having continued to be their Pastor. Let, then, a pious Minister, labouring

in a barren soil, and apparently in vain, think of the great and good Matthew Henry, and be encouraged.

At the conclusion of December 7, Mr. Benson says, "I have had a day of very hard labour, having not only preached twice at Queen-Street, and read prayers in the forenoon, but given tickets, and spoken particularly, to about two hundred and thirty-two persons. My subjects, both in the morning and evening to-day, were the superiority of the Gospel to the Law. My mind was much enlarged both times, and a door of utterance opened unto me."

At the request of his brethren the Preachers, in London, Mr. Benson preached, in the forenoon of Christmas-Day, at City-Road Chapel, to a large congregation. His subject was the incarnation of the second Person in the glorious Trinity, from John i. 14. At Snowfields, in the evening, he explained and applied John iii. 16. "I bless the Lord," says he, "This has been to me a very comfortable Christmas-Day; indeed, I think, one of the most comfortable I ever had. O that I may more than ever praise and glorify God for the gift of his Son!"

Being requested by Dr. Clarke to open the Watch-night on December 31, Mr. Benson, at half past eight o'clock, addressed a crowded audience, from Ps. xc. 12, in City-Road Chapel.

Having mentioned his hope of lasting good effects from this Watch-night, Mr. Benson, in his wonted strain of seriousness and true piety, says, "Blessed be the Lord, who has brought me and my wife and children to the beginning of this year, in health and safety. The Lord has greatly, and far beyond my expectation, restored my wife to a considerable portion of health and strength, from a state of very great and long-continued weakness,—and that, I believe, in answer to prayer. During the year, it has pleased him to give our two eldest daughters a knowledge of their acceptance with God, through the Son of his love. And, blessed be God, they have, from that time, and indeed for two or three years, given solid proof of their seriousness and genuine piety. My second son has dedicated himself to the sacred office of preaching the Gospel in the Church of England. Surely, for all these mercies, I am in duty bound to praise the Lord! I hope I am thankful for his mercies; and I now devote myself afresh to his service. May I and my whole family live more to his glory than we did the past year!"

Having been confined during the week preceding February 1, in consequence of having received a scald on one of his legs, Mr. Benson, under that date, says, "To-day I have been unable to supply my place at Queen-Street, according to our Quarterly Plan. I do not remember that I ever was hindered from preaching by indisposition, or any thing else, before, two Sundays together, since I first gave myself up to the work, and was received as a Travelling Preacher. I bless the Lord, I have spent to-day comfortably, in reading, meditation, and prayer; and I

hope, though prevented from attending the public ordinances, I have been enabled to improve my time, and worship God in spirit and in truth, in private. Bless the Lord, O my soul !”

On the 8th of February, Mr. Benson was so much better, that he read prayers and preached at Spitalfields in the forenoon, and at City-Road Chapel in the evening. He went through the labours of the day with a considerable degree of pain, and, at night, his leg was very much inflamed ; but, instead of sinking under the affliction, he says, “ I hope a day or two days’ rest will remove the inflammation.”

Government, on account of the continuance of the war, appointed the 25th of February as a day for a general Fast. In the forenoon of that day, Mr. Benson preached at Queen-Street, on Mark xi. 22, and in the evening at City-Road Chapel, on Is. xxvi. 9, 10. “ I bless the Lord,” says he, “ I was much assisted both times, especially in the evening, and I trust the word was not spoken in vain.” He then proceeds to notice an event highly creditable to the benevolence and good sense of the Legislature. “ The judgments of God have, through the divine blessing, produced two good effects. They have induced both Houses of Parliament, by a very great majority, to vote the Abolition of the Slave Trade, which vote will, no doubt, pass into a law. The other good effect I refer to is, that some of the parishes in London are forming societies for the suppression of vice.”

Referring to the execution of three malefactors at New-gate which had recently taken place, Mr. Benson says, “ A prodigious crowd of people assembled, it is supposed upwards of 40,000, and so pressed upon each other, that no fewer than thirty-two persons died on the spot ; fifteen or twenty more were very much bruised, eight or ten of whom have died since.” He then adds, in the true spirit of that religion which he adorned both in life and death, “ Such are the judgments of God ! May they be sanctified to many souls.”

We quote the following paragraph chiefly for the purpose of showing what patience and Christian joy Mr. Benson was in the habit of displaying when he was most abundant in labours :—

“ March 15. At Chelsea, in the morning, I discoursed with a degree of freedom on Dan. ix. 24. I spent the afternoon in retirement ; and at Grosvenor-Street Chapel, in the evening, explained and applied Eph. ii. 8, 9. I afterwards met two classes, and renewed their tickets ; and having also walked twelve or thirteen miles, when I arrived at home about eleven o’clock, I found myself rather weary, though, blessed be God, not of, but in my work.”

In the forenoon of March 27, it being Good-Friday, Mr. Benson preached at Queen-Street, from Heb. x. 10, a subject every way suited to the occasion ; “ and showed, at large, the influence which the sacrifice of Christ has on the sanctification of believers.” In the evening, at

the City-Road Chapel, his text was that remarkable passage in Isa lii. 13—15.

At the request of several friends, he went, on the 11th of April, to Lewes, in Sussex, for the purpose of opening a chapel. Learning that the Antinomian doctrine had been propagated there, he the more strongly insisted on the necessity of experimental and practical religion.

Leaving Lewes on the forenoon of the 13th of April, he, accompanied by some friends, proceeded to Brighton, where, to as many as the school-room would contain, he preached with much comfort in the evening, and afterwards gave the congregation an account of the rise, progress, doctrine, and discipline, of the Methodists. On the morning of the following day, he had a pleasant journey to London.

Mr. Benson's being so often invited to preach charity sermons, is one proof, amongst many, that he stood very high in the estimation of his brethren, the Preachers, and in that of the people at large. On the 19th of April, he preached in the forenoon at Snowsfields, in aid of the Benevolent Society, on Eph. ii. 10; and also at Lambeth, in the evening, from Gal. vi. 9. Upon both those occasions, he observes, that he was favoured with divine assistance.

But, accustomed as he was to plead the cause of the poor and needy, and that with extraordinary effect, he complains, that on April 26, whilst preaching at Spitalfields in the forenoon, and in the evening at City-Road Chapel, in aid of the last-mentioned charity, he was not favoured with his wonted liberty. "However," he remarks, "a large sum was collected at the latter place, morning and evening, which will afford relief to many distressed families."

At Wapping, on the 3d of May, Mr. Benson says, "This morning, we had a precious season while I was discoursing on Rom. viii. 10, 11. Many were much affected and comforted." Having crossed the river, in the evening he preached again, with much satisfaction, at Rotherhithe.

To persons of piety, however well acquainted with history in general, an account of the triumphs of the Cross can never fail to be interesting; whilst to those who are unacquainted with experimental religion, all such accounts appear as incredible as any contained in romance. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned."

At Queen-Street, in the forenoon of the 31st of May, he preached from 1 Tim. iii. 16, a passage replete with important revealed truth. "It was," he says, "a very precious opportunity, my own mind being refreshed, and the congregation large and attentive." After spending the afternoon in meditation and prayer, he discoursed in the evening from 1 Cor. xii. 3; but says, he did not speak with so much freedom as in the morning.

The 14th of June Mr. Benson spent at Woolwich, much to his own satisfaction, as well as to the edification of the people. He preached three times in the course of the day, and at each of them to a large congregation. "In the morning," he remarks, "the people were exceedingly affected. There seemed to be a peculiar blessing among them, and I hope the fruit of this day's services will appear after many days."

The following account of the Annual District Meeting, held in London this year, is given by Mr. Benson, under date July the 3d:—

"Our District Meeting being held this week, most of my time, for these three past days, has been taken up in attending the meetings of the brethren, and considering the affairs of the Connexion in general, and of this district in particular. We have cause to be thankful, that all the brethren in the district have walked according to the Gospel, and that the work flourishes in most places."

In each District Meeting, the character of every Preacher in it is examined, with respect to his morals, doctrines, attention to discipline, and his talents for the work of the ministry. In all those examinations, faithfulness, brotherly love, wisdom, and prudence are duly attended to. So high an opinion has the Conference of the justice and equity of the decisions of those meetings, that it generally adopts them without alteration.

On the 18th of July, Mr. Benson, after a very pleasant journey from London, arrived at Derby, where he preached three times to large congregations, and that with much liberty. Such divine power accompanied his discourses, that many were much impressed. The Trustees of the New Chapel, in which he preached, judiciously availed themselves of his visit, for the purpose of having a collection made, to assist in paying the interest of the money due upon the chapel, and other expenses.

In the forenoon of July 20, Dr. Fox, of Derby, took Mr. Benson in his carriage to Belper, where, in a large and commodious chapel, he preached to a crowded congregation, at seven o'clock in the evening. "I was favoured," says he, "with much liberty of mind and freedom of speech."

Having arrived at Cale-Green, in the vicinity of Stockport, about eight o'clock in the evening of July 21, he was most affectionately received by Mr. and Mrs. Mayer, whom he styles his "old and long-trying friends, Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile."

Having preached at Manchester on the evenings of July 23 and 25, he was, through his great love to his intelligent and affectionate friends there, prevailed upon to spend Sunday the 26th among them. Of his labours and success that day, the following is his own account. "Blessed be the Lord, this has been a very precious day. I have been very much assisted in my work; and I trust the word has been attended with a blessing. In the forenoon, at Salford, the chapel was exceedingly crowded,

and indeed many scores could not get in ; most present were very much affected while I described the fall and recovery of Peter. In the afternoon, at Bridgwater-Street, the chapel was much crowded, and we had a very affecting time, while I explained and applied, ‘ Why stand ye all the day idle ? ’ But at Oldham-Street Chapel, in the evening, the congregation was immense ; many went away, not being able to get in at any door ; and all were still as night, while I discoursed with freedom and enlargement on Heb. xii. 25. It was a most solemn, and, I trust, profitable time to many. I afterwards read a letter from Nova Scotia, when the whole congregation seemed as if nailed to the place, and unwilling to go away. The singers afterwards sung, in a delightful manner, that hymn, of which the following is the first verse :

‘ Blest be the dear uniting love,
That will not let us part ;
Our bodies may far off remove,
We still are one in heart ! ’

Mr. Benson having arrived, on the 27th of July, at Liverpool, where the Conference was held this year, found that, in the forenoon of that day, Mr. Barber had been chosen President, and Dr. Coke Secretary. On the following evening, according to appointment, he preached at Pitt-Street Chapel to a large and attentive congregation. His subject was, “ Great is the mystery of godliness,” &c.

After having preached at Leeds-Street Chapel, with much freedom and enlargement of heart, on the evening of July 31, he says, “ A divine influence seemed to attend the word, and many, apparently, were much affected. I hope the good impressions made will not be as the morning cloud and early dew.”

In the evening of August the 2d, he preached again at Leeds-Street, where, after the chapel was completely thronged, such multitudes flocked to hear him, as formed a congregation, to which one of the Preachers delivered a discourse in the open air.

Mr. Benson, having returned to London on the 13th of August, expressed his gratitude for the state of health and comfort in which he found his family ; and “ gave thanks together to the Lord for his loving-kindness.” On the following Lord’s day, August 16, with a reference to several individuals whom he knew to be severely exercised from various quarters, he preached in the morning at City-Road Chapel, on that encouraging declaration, “ All things work together for good to them that love God.” “ The word,” he observes, “ seemed to be attended with a blessing ; and, as I afterwards found, was made a means of comfort to many.”

It was surely no common privilege to sit under the ministry of such a man as Mr. Benson, who possessed such talents as enabled him to adapt

his discourses, and with good effect, to the states of mind and circumstances of all those whom he addressed. What the late Rev. Mr. Cecil said of the Methodist Preachers, viz. "They aim at *effect*," was emphatically applicable to him; and we may assert, without fear of contradiction, that greater and more lasting moral effects have seldom, since the apostolic age, been produced by the instrumentality of any one man's labours, than by those of JOSEPH BENSON. The recollection of him will, for a series of years, fill the eye of affection; but, such is the changeable state of things, that it will be said by some future historian of Methodism, "A generation arose that knew not [this] JOSEPH." But it is to be hoped, that then the Methodists will not be found either in a state of bondage to sin, or in that of civil slavery.

In the two extremes of life,—youth and age,—true religion appears to peculiar advantage; and hence it is not easy to determine, whether a young Timothy, who practises all the Christian virtues, or an aged Paul, about to lay down his head cheerfully to the "martyring axe," is a sight most pleasing to such as, in conjunction with improved minds, have their spiritual senses well exercised. Characters of this description know best how to estimate moral and religious worth; the only worth of any value in eternity.

These observations originated from Mr. Benson's saying, on the 15th of September, "I was glad to find several young persons in Mrs. Mortimer's Class, lately brought to the Lord."

Mr. Benson, who well understood the important lesson, which teaches "the heavenly use of earthly things," while engaged in a work, dry in itself, and uninteresting, viz. correcting the press, was, on the 2d of October, abundantly blessed. "I have found it," he says, "very edifying and refreshing to read the proof-sheets of Mr. Fletcher's Portrait of St. Paul, which we are now printing. O what a character does he draw of St. Paul, and of every true minister of Christ! O that I could, in some degree, bear that character!"

This he bore, in an eminent degree, though he knew no more of his doing so, than Moses did, that his own face shone when he came down from the Mount.

The following delightful account given by Mr. Benson, under date October 4, will be perused with interest:—

"I bless the Lord, this has been to me a very comfortable day, in preaching at Lambeth, both in the forenoon and evening. The Lord much assisted me both times; the congregations were very crowded and very attentive, and in the morning, in particular, many were affected. There seems to be a very gracious work among the people, and great unity and love between the Leaders and principal members of the Society."

The chief causes which conspired to make Mr. Benson a very able Preacher and Commentator, were his eminent piety, his strong under-

standing, and his sound learning, together with his diligence in studying the Sacred Volume. Under date October 23, he says, "What an inexhaustible mine of divine knowledge is the Holy Scripture! And, I bless God, I take delight to dig therein." Yes! he delighted to dig in that mine, and hence brought out of it the treasures contained in his writings in general, and in his Commentary in particular.

At City-Road Chapel, in the forenoon of November 22, he preached from this striking passage, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." "I was much assisted," he observes, "in showing that the true knowledge of God sufficeth for every purpose of piety and virtue, effectually saving those that possess it, from a profane and careless spirit, from hypocrisy, from formality, from Pharisaism, Antinomianism, and diffidence; from enmity against God, lukewarmness, self-will, and discontent," &c. His subject in the evening was, "Christ the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth."

After walking about twelve miles, preaching twice, and meeting the Society at Rotherhithe, on the 27th of December, Mr. Benson says, referring to the labours of that day, "I thank God, that I have been able to go through them with comfort, being very little weary."

Being appointed to preach in City-Road Chapel, on the 31st of December, Mr. Benson took for his subject 1 Pet. iv. 7. "I thank the Lord," says he, "I was much assisted in preaching; the congregation was large and attentive. Indeed the chapel was crowded, and almost all stayed till after twelve o'clock, when, the new year having been introduced with singing and prayer, the people dispersed."

"January 3d, 1808, being," says Mr. Benson, "the day appointed for the renewal of our covenant with God, at City-Road Chapel, I preached in the forenoon on Deut. xxix. 10—14. I showed, 1st. That to enter into covenant with God, and even hold meetings publicly for that purpose, is not an unprecedented thing in the Church of God, but has been usual in former ages: 2. The nature of the covenant into which we are called to enter, and how we may enter into it: 3. The end for which we should do it: 4. I applied the subject."

Had not Mr. Benson's fund of scriptural knowledge been immense, his preaching so often as he did to the very intelligent hearers who regularly attended at City-Road Chapel, would, in the course of a few years, have been rather unacceptable. But the reverse was the case; for, to the last, they heard him with pleasure and profit.

We find that he preached at City-Road Chapel, on the evening of January 5. "But," he remarks, "I did not find much liberty in speaking. I learned afterwards, however, that some had found it a profitable time. O that I could trust more in the Lord, and leave it entirely to him to give me more or less assistance, as he sees meet!"

This is the language of a man thoroughly acquainted with the condition of human nature, as well as experimental and practical religion.

The evening of January 27, being wet, Mr. Benson had an uncomfortable walk both going to, and returning from, Stratford. But though the walk there and back again was not less than ten miles he says, "I was not sorry that I went, meeting with a serious and attentive congregation."

The more deeply any drink into the spirit of holiness, they are the more disposed to promote peace and good-will amongst men, and they lay the less stress upon opinions on which the wise and good may safely differ. That some professors of piety at —— were not of this amiable description, will appear from the following citation.

"March 6. In the morning, I had a very pleasant ride to ——, where I preached with much satisfaction in the forenoon, and at six in the evening. The congregation was pretty large, especially in the evening, and very attentive. As I knew that many parties of professors have, from time to time, risen up at ——, and that opinions of different kinds, and modes of worship, have afforded matter for much debate, I discoursed in the morning on the importance of faith working by love, from Gal. v. 6: and in the evening, on the *New Creation*, from the next chapter; endeavouring to call their attention from trivial things, to the great and essential branches of real religion."

Were all who take in hand to preach the Gospel, in imitation of Mr. Benson, to lay out their main strength, not in support of mere opinions, whether right or otherwise, but in laying the foundation and raising the superstructure of true religion; the Protestant world would not be disgraced as it is by so many contending sects and parties, which, no doubt, contribute largely towards the spread of Popery and Infidelity.

On the evening of Tuesday, March 8, Mr. Benson called upon Mr. W——, who was apparently dying of a consumption; and finding that he was far from being satisfied with respect to the truth of Christianity, spent some time in conversing with him on the evidences adduced in proof of its truth and certainty. Mr. W—— seemed open to conviction; and Mr. Benson entertained a hope that he would be brought to experience the power of that blessed religion, the truth of which he unhappily called in question.

On the 15th of March, he paid Mr. W—— another visit. "I found him," says he, "much weaker in body, but, apparently, more desirous of knowing and believing the truth as it is in Jesus. I had sent him Doddridge's three sermons on the Evidences of Christianity, and I was glad to find that he had perused them carefully, and that he wished to peruse them again." On the 12th of April, Mr. Benson paid a third visit to the same gentleman, when he found reason to say, "I trust he is now truly in earnest for God's salvation."

The conversion of a skeptic, or even a determined infidel, is possible with Him whose power is infinite.

It has sometimes been asserted, and with great confidence, that all who *desire* to believe Christianity to be founded in truth and certainty, become Christians, and consequently cease to be either skeptics or infidels; but confidently as this has been asserted it is contradicted by matter of fact; for there have been several, who, by impiously cavilling at the decisive evidences afforded in proof of Christianity, and by opposing the glimmering taper of their own reason to the bright Sun of Revelation, have provoked God to leave them to be punished by their own delusions; so that when they wished to find rest to their agitated minds, by believing the Gospel, they found it to be impossible.

At City-Road Chapel, Mr. Benson, in the forenoon of May 22, preached for the benefit of the British and Foreign Bible Society. He chose, upon that occasion, for the subject of his discourse, Rom iii. 1, 2. The very judicious manner in which he treated the passage, is worthy of notice. "I considered, 1st. The appellation here given to the Scriptures, — 'The Oracles of God:' 2dly, The advantage they that are favoured with the Scriptures have above others: 3dly, The obligation which lies upon such, to improve this advantage themselves, and to communicate it to others."

Having thus given the outlines of his discourse, in the true spirit of a man who knew and felt that his sufficiency was of God, he adds; "I bless the Lord, I was much assisted; and I have reason to think it was a profitable time to many."

In the morning of May 29, Mr. Benson again preached at Queen-Street, in aid of the Bible Society. He briefly says, after mentioning this, "We had a precious opportunity."

Mr. Benson, accompanied by Mr. Jenkins, arrived at Bristol, on the 22d of July, in order to attend the Conference, which was opened upon the 25th. Mr. James Wood was chosen President, and Dr. Coke, Secretary. At seven in the evening, according to appointment, Mr. Benson preached to a crowded congregation of Preachers and people, on 2 Cor. iii. 5, 6; on which occasion he expresses his thankfulness for the divine assistance he received, and the apparent benefit which attended his exertion.

In the forenoon of July 31, he preached to a most crowded congregation at Ebenezer Chapel, when he says, "The Lord enlarged my heart, and opened to me a door of utterance; and I trust the word was with power to many who were present on the occasion."

In the afternoon of August 9, the Conference ended in peace and harmony; after which the Preachers received the Lord's Supper together. "We had," says Mr. Benson, "a comfortable and refreshing season."

Accompanied by some of his brethren, the Preachers, he arrived in London on the 11th of August, when he entered upon his regular work with all his wonted spirit and vigour.

On the 28th of August, he says : " We have this day opened our New Chapel at Brighton. I feared much we should not have a tolerable congregation. But before I began to preach in the forenoon, the chapel was well filled. Mr. Rodda read the 122d Psalm, and then gave out

' Lo God is here! let us adore!

And own how dreadful is this place!

Let all within us feel his power,

And silent bow before his face!"

Afterwards he prayed, and then read, Isa. xl. and 1 Pet. ii. I then gave out another suitable hymn, and preached with comfort from 2 Cor. iv. 5, 6: in the evening my subject was 2 Cor. iv. 7, ' We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of man."

At the request of Mr. Griffith, who was somewhat indisposed, Mr. Benson consented to preach for him on the evening of December 20. " My subject," says he, " was Jer. xxiii. 5, 6; but I did not find so much liberty in preaching as I usually do." After mentioning this fact, and saying that the subject is a fine one, he judiciously adds, " The Lord gives or withholds freedom of speech, as it pleaseth him."

A new, large, and commodious chapel having been erected in the Borough of Southwark, Mr. Benson opened it by preaching a sermon in the forenoon of the 28th of December. His subject was Romans i. 16. " Blessed be God," he remarks, " I was enabled to discourse with much enlargement of heart. The congregation was very attentive, and many were affected, especially towards the close of the sermon."

It cannot be doubted that Mr. Benson walked humbly with God, and hence, in addition to that holy joy, which is an abiding part of the fruit of the Spirit, he was occasionally favoured with special times of refreshing. One of those blessed seasons he notices under date January 5, 1809.

" This morning I had a very sweet and profitable opportunity in private prayer and meditation. Persuaded of my acceptance with God, and conscious that it has long been, and still is, my end and aim, in all things, to glorify Him, I enjoyed great peace and consolation in God, and devoted myself anew to his service. O that he would direct, help, and comfort me, that I may live more than ever to his glory!"

Mr. Benson in addition to his uncommon talents for awakening sinners, and regularly feeding the souls committed to his care, excelled in preaching occasional sermons. Two such he delivered on February 8,

being a day set apart by Government for fasting and humiliation. Isaiah xxvi. 9, 10, was his subject at Southwark Chapel, in the forenoon; and Hos. xiv. 1, was that on which he preached at Spitalfields in the evening; "when," says he, "I was enabled, I trust, to declare the whole counsel of God."

Having been requested by Mr. M'Allum, the Superintendent Preacher of the Canterbury circuit, and the Society at Feversham, to open a new chapel there, Mr. Benson, on the 2d of March, preached in it three times, "The congregation," says he, "each time was much crowded, and several were affected."

Proceeding in the forenoon of March 3, to Canterbury, he preached there in the evening, on the Parable of the Sower. He observes that he was favoured with freedom on the occasion.

The following is his account of his labours in Canterbury, on the 5th of March. "I thank God, I have been enabled to preach three times to day with much liberty, and I trust not in vain. The chapel was well filled in the forenoon, and all seemed very attentive, while I explained and enforced Heb. iv. 1. In the afternoon the chapel was crowded, when my subject was Matt. xx. 6; and many were much affected. In the evening the congregation was still larger, many I believe, not being able to get in; and we had a most solemn time, while I discoursed on Rev. xx. 11, 12. I hope the bread cast upon the waters will be found after many days."

On the evening of March 6, Mr. Benson preached at Rochester, to a crowded audience, on that interesting passage contained in Daniel ix. 24, "Seventy weeks are determined," &c. "The Lord" says he, "assisted me; and I trust it was a profitable time to many."

On the 7th of March, having arrived at home in safety, and finding his family well, he expressed his gratitude to God in glowing terms.

Few, if any employments, innocent in themselves, have a greater tendency so to occupy the attention, as to render a man less alive to spiritual realities, than that of correcting the press; and yet, matter of fact proves that a man, while diligently engaged in it, may be rapidly advancing in holiness, and consequently be increasingly alive to those realities. Of this we find a proof in the following paragraph from Mr. Benson's Journal.—"March 11. These four last days, I have been *fully* employed in my office of Editor and corrector of the press, my journey to Kent having thrown me behind-hand with my work." But as whatever he did, he did it not only sincerely, but heartily unto the Lord, he forfeited no spiritual advantage by the employment in question; and hence, he says, "My soul has enjoyed great peace and tranquility, with liberty of access to the throne of grace."

It is highly pleasing to find a Minister of one denomination, having fully divested himself of bigotry, without infringing upon scriptural ortho-

doxy, speaking in unqualified terms of approbation of the discourses of another. An instance of this occurs, under date May 4. "In the forenoon, I attended at Surry Chapel, and heard a Minister from Edinburgh. His subject was Psalm xlv. 17, 'I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations,' &c. He shewed at large, 1. That notwithstanding the difficulties in the way, and the efforts that had been used in many generations to suppress his (Christ's) name; yet that had been remembered, when other names, however great and glorious, had perished: 2. The means made use of to perpetuate his name; (1.) The Bible; (2.) Preaching the word; and, (3.) The efforts of God's people. It certainly was an able sermon; but lost, I think, upon three parts of the congregation."

The stability of the friendships which Mr. Benson contracted, and the warmth of affection with which thousands spoke of him many years after they had seen him, and do speak of him to the present day; prove that he was directly the reverse of a reed shaken by the wind; and that he possessed a more than ordinary portion of divine love, knowledge, and prudence. One proof out of the many on record of the stability of his friendships, occurs in his Journal under date May 21, a passage he wrote at Birmingham.

"Yesterday, I left London at five o'clock in the afternoon, and after a very pleasant and agreeable journey, arrived here at twelve next day. I have been kindly received by my old friends, Mr. and Mrs. T——, formerly of Wheatley-Wood, near Sheffield. After various losses, through the imprudence or knavery of some with whom they were connected in trade, they seem pretty comfortably settled here in a saw manufactory. At seeing me, in remembrance of former times, they were very much affected."

At Birmingham, on May 23, Mr. Benson preached two Charity Sermons in aid of the Sunday Schools, the one at Coleshill-Street, in the morning, and the other in the evening at Cherry-Street. On both those occasions his congregations were large and crowded. The collection amounted to nearly double what had been on any former occasion collected for a similar purpose, in those chapels.

The conference being held this year at Manchester, Mr. Benson arrived there on the 27th of July; and on the 30th he preached in the forenoon at Oldham-Street, to a crowded congregation of preachers and people.—His subject was Rom. i. 16. "The Lord," says he, "favoured me with much liberty in speaking, and many seemed to be much affected."

On the morning of July 31, the Conference was opened, when the late venerable THOMAS TAYLOR was chosen President, and Mr. Benson, Secretary. In addition to his duly attending to the weight of business which devolved on him as Secretary, he preached several times during the Conference. The truth is, that his brethren, the Preachers, were so

pleased and edified on every occasion when they heard him, that they did all in their power to prevail upon him to preach as often as possible. His appearing repeatedly in the pulpit during the time of Conference, did not excite the least degree of envy in the minds of any of the Preachers.

After preaching at Salford on the evening of August 2, with much enlargement of heart and expression, Mr. Benson says, "All seemed attentive, and to receive the word with desire and delight."

On the morning of August 6, accompanied by Mr. Reece and Mr. Marsden, he went from Manchester to Bolton, where he preached twice with freedom and enlargement, to numerous congregations, in aid of the Sunday Schools.

Assuredly Mr. Benson was the happy and highly honoured instrument of collecting many thousands of pounds for charitable purposes! In all his discourses, but more especially those he delivered in aid of charitable institutions, he appealed equally to the understandings and hearts of those whom he addressed. To what an amazing extent did he often, upon such occasions, both inform and persuade!

On the evening of August 12, he preached at Bridgewater-Street, but not, according to his own account, with his wonted liberty. Complaints of this sort he frequently made, when his being straitened whilst preaching was discerned by himself alone.

His friend Mr. Barlow, of Manchester, at whose house he lodged, and whom, together with his family, he mentions in the warmest language of friendship, took him in a post-chaise to Daviholme, where he preached in the afternoon and evening of Sunday, August 13. In the afternoon, he says that he was not able to speak with his usual clearness and recollection, but that in the evening he was favoured with much liberty, and that most of the congregation appeared to be much impressed.

In the afternoon of August 17, the Conference concluded, after continuing almost three weeks. Many causes united to lengthen out the sitting of this Conference, one of which was, the bad state of the Finances of the Connexion. "However," says Mr. Benson, "we have had, upon the whole, peace and harmony, although at the same time, much difference of opinion, and many debates on several subjects."

Having preached twice at Stockport on the 20th of August, and spent the night at Mr. Mayer's; Mr. Braithwaite and Mr. Gloyne having brought a chaise for him on the following day, Mr. Benson proceeded with them to Macclesfield, where he preached with much freedom in the evening. His subject was 1 John v. 11, 12; and the congregation was very attentive.

Having arrived at Leicester early in the afternoon of August 22, he had the pleasure of spending the rest of the day in company with his son, and Mrs. Benson. When he arrived in London about ten o'clock in the

evening of the 23d, he had the happiness of finding his family well. "Blessed be God," says he, "for the many mercies with which I have been favoured during my journey, and five weeks' absence from home."

Mr. Benson, having on the 2d of September dined at the house of Mr. M——, in company with that pious and intelligent gentleman, and several other respectable individuals, observes, that one gentlemen in the company, by "his extremely singular opinions on divers points, and his impatience of contradiction, rendered the conversation, towards its conclusion, very unpleasant." He then adds, with his wonted judgment and sincerity, "Alas! what is Christianity without humility and simplicity!"

Alas! how few know how to contend earnestly for the *Faith*, or even for *matters* of opinion, without indulging, more or less, tempers opposed to the religion of Him, who, "when he was reviled, reviled not again," and "when he was persecuted, did not threaten!" And yet, without that religion, consisting of humble, patient love, described in the 13th chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, whatever men believe, do, or suffer, they are unqualified for that place into which nothing opposed to that divine principle can possibly enter. At the coming of the heavenly Bridegroom, charity itself cannot prevent our believing, that many will be found having the lamp of profession without the oil of grace!

We are far from making these observations in reference to that learned, amiable, and pious gentleman, who, in consequence of his embracing some singular opinions, joined to a high degree of nervous irritability, which is a bodily disease, created a considerable degree of uneasiness in the intelligent and highly-polished company last mentioned. That gentleman, with whom we have had the pleasure and honour of being personally acquainted, stood in the first rank of Mr. Wesley's friends, and drew up one of the most finished sketches of that extraordinary man's character.

Having mentioned, under date September 27, that he had not preached for a week past, on account of a cold which he had caught a short time before, he adds, that he was fully employed as Editor; and then, in the true spirit of a man who well understood "the heavenly use of earthly things," he says, "I have endeavoured, in every thing, to set the Lord before me; have found access to him with confidence, in prayer; and have been, from day to day; looking to him for direction in my work, of which I see I have great need."

In compliance with a request of the preceding Conference, Mr. Benson, a few days previous to the 7th of October began to write Notes on the Bible; but as the Book Committee had it then in contemplation to publish Notes written by an eminent Divine in the Connexion, he says, "If they do, I shall not proceed with mine, and shall be eased of a task too great for me to undertake at my time of life."

At this period of his life, to undertake the writing of comparatively short Notes on all the Scriptures, which was the whole of what was then intended, might well be considered an arduous task ; but for him to write a large Commentary on the whole of the Sacred Volume, such as he afterwards published, would by many, at that time, have been deemed utterly impossible.

The subscribers to the work, as originally proposed to be comprised in one large folio volume, or two volumes quarto, were so highly gratified in perusing a few of the first numbers on Genesis, in which Mr. Benson enlarged considerably, that they generally expressed a wish that he would proceed with the work as he had begun ; and that, instead of a Family Bible, he would furnish them with a Commentary. Of this general wish, he received information from the Preachers in various parts of the Connexion ; and the succeeding Conference having expressed a similar desire, he, with a diligence and ardour, of which few, even young men, were capable, proceeded with the arduous undertaking.

On the 30th of November, he received intelligence of his sister, Mrs. Burnell's death, at Durham, where she, her husband, and family, had resided. Her death was sudden ; for she had attended preaching at the chapel at two o'clock in the afternoon of Sunday, November 26, and about nine o'clock in the evening of the following day, rested from all her labours and sufferings.

The following account of her, by Mr. Benson, will be perused with interest, not only by her surviving relations, but by pious readers in general :—

“ My sister turned sincerely to the Lord when she was about twenty years of age, at the time I did, which is now three and forty years ago. She then found redemption in the blood of Christ, the forgiveness of sins, and joined the Methodist Society. From that time till the end of her life, she continued a member, and, I trust, in general, walked worthy of her Christian profession. Her faith and patience were greatly tried by bodily affliction in herself and family. But she was enabled to put her trust in the Lord, and to resign herself up to his disposal, meeting death, at last, with perfect peace and resignation. May the Lord sanctify her death to me, as also to her husband and surviving children !”

In the forenoon of December 25, Mr. Benson preached at City-Road Chapel to a very large congregation. His subject was John xviii. 37. “ The people,” he observes, “ were remarkably attentive, and a divine influence was evidently among them. May the effect be lasting !”

Under date December 31, he laments the increasing affliction of the excellent partner of his life, the wife of his youth, the mother of his children, and the long-tried and long-beloved companion of his joys and sorrows.

Mrs. Benson died, in a blessed expectation of future felicity, January 3, 1810, in the fifty-second year of her age. "We lived together," says Mr. Benson, "thirty years within one month, but we are now parted till the resurrection of the just."

With true paternal, as well as conjugal, affection, he proceeds: "All my children have been much affected at the death of their mother; but I best know the loss I have suffered. And this evening such a load of sorrow came upon my mind, as I knew neither how to shake off, nor support. However, after a little time, I obtained some relief. May the Lord sanctify this dispensation to me and to us all!"

Several who never duly considered, that many things are lawful which are not expedient, did not form any correct idea of the motive which induced Mr. Benson, for several years, to oppose the introduction of the Lord's Supper into the Methodist Chapels. It has been already observed, that he had a principal hand in drawing up the Plan of Pacification; according to which, upon the conditions stipulated, the Methodists were allowed to receive it at the hands of their own Preachers. That he never deemed their doing so unlawful, will appear from what he says in his Journal, on the 11th of February.

"February 11. This morning I preached at Lambeth. My subject was Luke viii. 18. Mr. Jenkins was to have administered the sacrament; but he being weak and unwell, I read the service, and gave the bread. This is the first time that I ever administered, or assisted in administering, the Lord's Supper. I have always hitherto declined it, and that for *one* only reason, that I might as little as possible depart from the Church of England; wishing the Methodists to communicate at their parish churches, as in Mr. Wesley's days."

Surely, Mr. Benson, for many years previously to his resting from his labours, if not throughout the whole of his ministerial career, imposed such arduous tasks upon himself as few men have been ever able to perform. Among the many proofs of this which might be adduced, we find one in the following paragraph, bearing date April 14. My whole time has been occupied this week with the Magazine, the new edition of Mr. Wesley's Works, and preparing Notes on the Bible. I find daily that I have too much work upon my hands; but how to help it I do not know, as I cannot tell to whom, with any propriety, I could commit any part of it. May the Lord direct me in all things, and give a blessing to my endeavours to show forth his praise!"

At the earnest request of Mr. Aikenhead and several others, Mr. Benson went to open a new chapel at Marlow, where he arrived on the morning of April 24. "We had," he observes, "a crowded congregation at half past ten. Several Dissenting Ministers were present on the occasion. After reading the first chapter of St. Peter's first Epistle, pre-

ceded by the singing of a suitable hymn and prayer, and followed by another hymn, I preached with much freedom on 1 Cor. iii. 11—13 : many of the congregation were affected.”

In compliance with the desire of many friends, he had intended to preach again at two o'clock, as well as in the evening ; but finding that a Baptist Minister was willing to preach, he gave him the pulpit. “I preached again,” says he, “in the evening, when the congregation was crowded, and we had a precious opportunity. I hope fruit will be found of this day's exercises, and that the work of God will prosper at Marlow and the neighbourhood.”

Mr. Rankin, an old Preacher, who travelled several years in America, but who resided in London, as a Supernumerary, for a considerable time, died on the 17th of May. On the evening of the 27th, Mr. Benson preached his funeral sermon at City-Road Chapel. “The congregation,” he remarks, “which was immense, was very attentive, and the Lord, in a measure, assisted me on the occasion.”

On the 3d of June, Mr. Benson opened a new chapel at Towcester, in which he preached three times to very crowded congregations. A more than ordinary degree of power attended the word, particularly in the forenoon and afternoon. “Blessed be the Lord,” says he, “I have seen his providence remarkably manifested in opening a way for my coming on this business, and, in a sense, compelling me to it, when I did every thing to avoid it but absolutely refuse to come.”

The general Conference met in London on the morning of the 30th of July, when, after attending to some preliminary business, they chose Mr. Benson President, and Dr. Coke Secretary. In the year 1798, Mr. Benson, at the Bristol Conference, filled that very important office. On his being now called to preside, he makes the following judicious observations. “This to me was unexpected till last Friday or Saturday ; and it will greatly hinder me in my work of editing the Magazine and other works, and going on with my Commentary on the Bible. However, I hope the Lord will assist and help me through these difficulties ; especially as the burden was laid upon me by my brethren, in the course of Providence, and entirely without my seeking.”

On the 4th of August, grateful for the assistance he had received in the performance of the important duties attached to his office, Mr. Benson expresses himself thus : “I thank the Lord, he has helped me through one week, and we certainly have gone on in great peace and harmony, and much better than usual. Unto God be all the glory !”

It being the custom for the President to preach the first Sunday evening after he is chosen, Mr. Benson, on the 5th of August, preached at City-Road Chapel. The congregation was immense, indeed, far more than could get into the chapel ; so that there was a necessity of appointing one of the brethren to preach out of doors. Mr. Benson remarks,

"I bless God, I was very much assisted in explaining and applying Col. i. 27, 28. I trust many felt the power of the word, and will not lose the good impressions made upon their minds."

The evening of August the 6th being the time appointed for the admission of the young Preachers, who had finished their four years' probation, an immense multitude assembled at City-Road Chapel, about an hour before six o'clock, which was the time appointed for the commencement of the service. One half of the people could not gain admittance; so that it was again necessary that there should be preaching on the ground adjoining the chapel. There being fifteen young men to be examined by the President, and to give an account of their experience and call to the ministry, and some of them enlarging too much, no more than about one half of them were examined on the occasion. "In general," says Mr. Benson, "they spoke well, and to the edification of the audience."

On the evening of the 7th of August, the remainder of the young men to be received into full Connexion, were examined, and gave a pleasing and satisfactory account of their conversion to God, and call to the ministry. "I had intended," Mr. Benson observes, "to have given a charge to them, but was obliged to defer it, for want of time; publishing that Mr. Thomas Roberts would preach a sermon suited to the occasion to-morrow evening."

It is not only highly desirable, but generally necessary, in order to Ministers' preaching with sufficient ease, clearness, and connection, that they should have sufficient time for retirement previously to their ascending the pulpit. Some of the unpleasant effects of his not being favoured with that privilege, Mr. Benson mentions in the following paragraph.

"December 16. At Southwark Chapel this morning I explained and applied Isa. xxv. 6—9. The whole afternoon, from two till five, I was occupied in meeting classes, and of consequence was prevented from obtaining any time for premeditation before I went into the pulpit. I felt the inconvenience of this when speaking. For though my subject was Jer. iii. 19, a passage which I had frequently discoursed from at other places, yet, for want of a little previous meditation, I neither had my usual freedom in speaking, nor did what was spoken come so immediately from the heart as it would probably otherwise have done."

Meeting classes for three hours, with no more than a short interval between having done so, and entering the pulpit, is a task too severe for human frailty, and hence, without absolute necessity, ought not to be imposed.

Having been invited to open a new chapel at Rochester, Mr. Benson preached twice in it on the 27th of December. "The morning," says he, "was wet and boisterous; nevertheless we had the new chapel well filled with hearers, which we opened with suitable hymns, prayers, and

portions of Scripture read. I then preached with much liberty on John xviii. 37. Mr. Kelk preached in the afternoon, when it was again well filled. In the evening it was crowded, when my heart was much enlarged while I explained and applied 1 John i. 3."

Having, though with great reluctance, engaged to open a new chapel at Gosport, on the 1st of January, Mr. Benson arrived at Portsea about seven in the evening of December 31. The next morning accompanied by some friends, he says, "I took boat, and crossed over to Gosport, where I found erected a neat commodious chapel, somewhat smaller than that I opened at Rochester. It was very well filled, although the frost was very severe, and the day cold. I preached in the forenoon, with great satisfaction, on the same subject which I had at Rochester. At the pressing invitation of our friends, I discoursed again at half past two, and also at six in the evening. The chapel was well filled every time, although not so crowded as that at Rochester. I trust that great good will arise from erecting this chapel. Blessed be the Lord, for bringing me through the labours of this day!"

This is the language of a man, who, thoroughly sensible of his own weakness, reposed the whole of his confidence in "the Lord God Omnipotent." In him he trusted, and therefore was never confounded.

On the 3d of January, about ten at night, Mr. Benson arrived at home. After supper, when he kneeled to pray, he fell upon the floor, as if dead. Of this, says he, "my daughters afterwards informed me." He then adds, "They lifted me up, and in about ten minutes I came to myself, and found that I was seated in a chair. Blessed be the Lord for his mercies, who did not so suddenly give me over to death, which would have been very distressing to my dear children; though I have no doubt that I should have been with the Lord, having no other business any day of my life, or any hour of any day, than to live to him who died for me."

O how happy, as well as holy, was Mr. Benson, who with the utmost sincerity was able to use this language!

On the evening of February 10, he preached at City-Road Chapel, on the occasion of Mrs. Coke's death. That eminently pious lady died on the 25th of January. The congregation which attended to hear her funeral sermon was immense, and all, says Mr. Benson, "as still as night." He then adds, for he acknowledged the Lord in all his ways, "The Lord greatly assisted me, and, I trust, the word spoken, and the account given of the deceased, will be followed with a lasting blessing to many."

Having confined himself almost entirely to his study throughout the week preceding, Mr. Benson was unable to preach on Sunday, April 21. He observes, "I should have preached at Spitalfields this forenoon, and at the City-Road Chapel this evening; but having confined myself almost

entirely to my study all the last week, and wrote and read with hardly any intermission, from about five in the morning to eleven at night, I found myself very unwell when I rose this morning, and inclined to fall down and faint away. I continued all the forenoon, and a great part of the afternoon, excessively sick at times, and inclined to faint. I thank God, I grew better towards the evening. May this affliction be sanctified to me and all my children !”

In the forenoon of April 28, Mr. Benson preached in aid of the Benevolent Society, at the City-Road Chapel, and “was very much assisted.”

At the very earnest request of Mr. Barker, Superintendent Preacher at Portsmouth, and the Leaders and Trustees, and other friends there, Mr. Benson consented to open their new Chapel on the first of May. On the 29th of April, he arrived at Portsea, where he preached on the following evening to a pretty large audience; his subject was the Parable of the Sower.

“May 1. This day,” says he, “has been wet and uncomfortable; nevertheless the new chapel has been very well filled both forenoon and evening; in the evening, indeed, crowded.” His subject in the forenoon was Rom. i. 16, and in the evening Luke xxiv. 47. “The Lord,” he remarks, “favoured me with great liberty and enlargement in speaking; the congregation was as still as night, and some were much impressed. The collection amounted to £110.”

About this time, the Methodists, and such of the Dissenters as were in the habit of sending Ministers to preach the Gospel where they had no fixed congregations, were much alarmed by a Bill about to be submitted to Parliament by Lord Sidmouth; a bill, which, if passed into a law and acted upon, would have materially impeded the progress of evangelical religion. It is to the credit of His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, that he was amongst the first to give that Bill his powerful and decided opposition. The resolutions passed at that time by the Committee for guarding the Privileges of the Methodists, are so replete with good sense and loyalty, that they deserve to go down to the latest posterity. The introduction of the Bill in question, which, no doubt, with the best intentions, Lord Sidmouth wished to be carried through both Houses of Parliament, led, eventually, to such a revision and amendment of the Toleration Act, as had long been rather an object of desire than of expectation. It is to the honour of all parties in Parliament, that the Act in question, which carries religious toleration as far as it *ought* to be carried, met with no opposition in either House of Parliament. The facility with which it passed was greatly owing to the wisdom, prudence, and indefatigable exertions of two gentlemen, viz. JOSEPH BUTTERWORTH, Esq. M. P., and THOMAS ALLAN, Esq. to both of whom, the religious public, but more especially the Methodists, are

under great obligations for their powerful and successful efforts in favour of religious liberty.

The following short account of that eminent saint of God, LADY MARY FITZGERALD, will be perused with interest by such of the surviving friends of her Ladyship, as know how to estimate her moral and religious worth.

June 12, Mr. Benson observes, "I spent some time to-day with Lady Mary Fitzgerald. She is now become exceeding feeble, and seems sinking fast into the grave. But her faculties do not seem much, if any thing impaired, save her hearing, which is very imperfect. And the graces of God's Spirit, especially humility, resignation, and patience, are in lively exercise. She is evidently ripening fast for glory, and, I doubt not, whenever she is called, will change mortality for life. Happy was the choice she made, when she gave up the gay world, and the pleasures of a court, for the cross and reproach of Christ."

The late Rev. THOMAS SCOTT, a man whose praise is in all the churches, preached her Ladyship's funeral sermon. After having ably sketched the leading features of her excellent character, he gives the following account of her sudden removal, in the ninetieth year of her age, from the regions of inquietude to the abodes of the blessed.

"On Saturday evening, April 8, her servant had taken her up her supper, and left her for about the space of five minutes, when suddenly he was alarmed with a ringing of the bell, and violent shrieks. He ran, in great terror, and saw his mistress on the staircase, (to use his own expression) a pillar of fire! It was with great difficulty that the flames could be extinguished, and not before she had received fatal injury. The shock produced on her body and mind, seemed from the first to have brought on symptoms of approaching dissolution. Her pulse could not be distinguished at the wrist, but her mind retained its usual powers, and she spoke clearly, and with much apparent strength. With her usual gentleness and politeness, to a medical friend who staid with her till within three hours of her death, she expressed her concern that he should have been disturbed at so late an hour; and in the course of the night she said, 'I could not have been long here, and I might as well go home this way as any other.' At other times, she frequently prayed, 'Lord Jesus! save a poor vile sinner.' To some of her noble relatives, who stood near her couch, she said, 'Oh! if this burning be so terrible, what must everlasting burnings be!' Afterwards she affectionately took leave of her relations and grand-children, like dying Jacob, praying for a blessing on them; and she requested they would leave her with her attendants. Her last words were, 'Come, Lord Jesus, my blessed Redeemer; come, and receive my spirit!' Having thus adopted the dying prayer of Stephen, like him she 'fell asleep,' and waked to keep an

eternal Sabbath in the realms of glory. This was about six in the morning."

In conformity with a clause in her will, her remains were interred in the burial-ground of the City-Road Chapel. A marble tablet has been erected to her memory, in the south-east corner of the chapel. After her parentage, birth, title, and death, are mentioned upon the tablet, it is added,

"This Monument was erected, as a tribute of affection and veneration, by her grandson, Lieutenant-Colonel THOMAS GEORGE FITZ-GERALD."

On the 15th of June, Mr. Benson expresses his gratitude to God, that he had been enabled to finish the Fifth Part of his Commentary upon the Bible; and that the demand for the work was such, that it was necessary to reprint all the former numbers. Having, in substance, expressed himself thus, he turned his attention for a moment to a consideration of the ministerial and literary labours in which he was about to be engaged; and, with the wisdom of a sage, and the piety of a man of God, said, "I must not look too much before me, otherwise the prospect of so much labour would quite discourage me. I must take each day as it comes, and trust in the Lord for strength for the day."

Had we no other proof of the high estimation in which Mr. Benson was held by the religious public, than the eagerness with which his services were desired when collections were to be made for the support of the work of God at home or abroad, or of charitable institutions of various descriptions, it would satisfy us, that he continued to the last, in addition to all his other excellencies, one of the most popular Preachers in England. This was the reason why he was invited to preach so many charity sermons, and open so many new chapels, when collections are always made to assist in defraying the expenses incurred by their erection.

On the 26th of June, he opened a new chapel at Salisbury. "It will contain," says he, "I think, twelve hundred or fourteen hundred people, and is well contrived for hearing." It was completely filled in the forenoon; and at six in the evening many scores could not get within the doors, when he preached from 1 Cor. iii. 11—13.

Though Mr. Benson may well be said to have lived in the region of intellect, yet he never lost a relish for the beauties of nature or art. On the 28th of June he spent an hour in viewing Salisbury Cathedral, which he says is "a light, neat, and beautiful Gothic structure, not much, if any thing inferior to that of Lincoln, or even York. Nay, it is judged to be the most elegant and regular building in the kingdom."

"But alas!" he remarks, "of how little use is this immense and curious edifice, begun in 1219, and finished in 1258, and which, according

to an estimate delivered in to Henry III., cost 40,000 marks ; but if built now, would doubtless cost a hundred times as much ! There is not a place in any part of it for a congregation of one thousand people ; nor, I understood, do so many as a hundred generally attend."

Having arrived at Derby on the 20th of July, Mr. Benson preached there three times the following day, "with much liberty, and good effect upon the minds of the hearers. All were very attentive, and some seemed much affected."

On the 22d of July, having arrived at Sheffield, in order to attend the Conference which was held there this year, he went, as usual, to the house of his hospitable friend Mr. Holy. After preaching in the evening of July 28, he says, "I thank the Lord, he assisted me very much, and I believe it was to many a profitable opportunity. There were nearly three hundred Preachers, and a very crowded congregation, and all attentive and still as night. My subject was *The Truth*, from John xviii. 37. I intended the sermon to be introductory to a set of sermons, on the great and leading doctrines of the Gospel, to be delivered by different Preachers, at the same chapel, in the evenings during the Conference."

On the 14th of August, accompanied by Dr. Clarke, and some other Preachers, he arrived safe in London after a very agreeable journey.

How mysterious, in numberless instances, are the dispensations of Providence ! One of these Mr. Benson notices under date September 17, viz. the rather sudden death of Mr. John Brown, who had been an itinerant Preacher for about ten years. He was a young man eminent for piety, zeal, and ministerial abilities. After coming to the Metropolis, he preached no more than one sermon. The complaint which proved fatal to him was a rheumatic fever. "Under his severe affliction, he was resigned, cheerful, and happy in God ; declaring, a little before his departure, that the bed, on which he had endured so much pain, had been to him a bed of roses."

In the forenoon of Sunday, September 29, Mr. Benson preached at Hinde-Street, and at Lambeth in the evening ; at both of which places a collection was made for the support of the Sunday-Schools. "I thank God," he says, "I was much assisted each time. The congregations were remarkably attentive, and a pretty large collection was made."

Having thus expressed himself, he mentions with approbation, the singing and good behaviour of the children, both at Lambeth and Hinde-Street, but especially at the latter place, where, although the School had only been instituted one year, six hundred and eight-five children were regularly instructed.

At night, on his return home, Mr. Benson says, "Having walked to-day about thirteen or fourteen miles, as well as preached twice, and read prayers once, I found myself a little tired."

On the evening of December 27, Mr. Benson preached at Rochester; the 28th he spent in retirement, being, as he says, chiefly employed in making preparation for the duties of the approaching Lord's day. Of the labours of that day he gives the following account. "In the forenoon, at Brompton, I discoursed with much liberty and enlargement of mind on 1 John iii. 8, and in the afternoon on Heb. ii. 3. The congregation was both times large and attentive. At six in the evening I preached at Rochester to a very crowded and attentive audience. My subject at the request of some friends, was Rev. xx. 11, 12, and I was assisted to speak with much freedom, clearness, and energy; and I trust the divine unction accompanied the word."

It would appear from the following paragraph, that the people at Canterbury possess large and benevolent minds; as none but characters of that description are disposed, whatever may be their property, to give so liberally towards the support of the Gospel, as they did on the first of January, 1812.

"Blessed be the Lord," says Mr. Benson, "we have had a good beginning of the new year. In the forenoon, at half past ten, we began service at the new chapel. Mr. Ransom prayed and read two chapters, and I gave out the hymns and preached. Upwards of £100 was collected immediately after sermon. In the afternoon Mr. C. preached, and £16 more were collected. In the evening I preached again, when the congregation was crowded, and about £34 more were collected; so that, upon the whole, upwards of £150 were collected during the day; and yet, except in the evening, the congregation was not large. I thank God, I was very much assisted in preaching each time; and I trust a blessing accompanied the word."

We quote the following paragraph, chiefly because mention is made in it of the mild and tolerant nature of our Government, as well as of the late lamented Mr. Perceval.

"Feb. 23. Last week," says Mr. Benson, "a deputation of our Committee of Privileges waited on the Right Honourable the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Perceval, at his house in Downing-Street, respecting the many instances occurring in different parts of the kingdom, in which our Preachers, itinerant and local, have been refused licenses, in consequence of a new construction put on the Toleration Act, by Lord Ellenborough and other Judges in the King's Bench. Mr. Perceval received us very politely, showed us great courtesy and kindness, and patiently heard an account of our whole plan and economy. And he gave us the greatest assurance, that his Majesty's Government had neither intention nor desire to persecute, nor will *sanction any kind of religious persecution or intolerance.*"

A Circular Letter from the General Committee of Privileges was about this time forwarded by post to all the Superintendent Preachers in Eng-

land, containing suitable advices to them and the people under their care, in the critical circumstances in which they were placed. We can afford space for no more than a few extracts of this excellent Letter, which, no doubt, had a powerful tendency to remove from the minds of both Preachers and people, any apprehension which they might have entertained that His Majesty's Government had it in contemplation to deprive them of any of their religious privileges.

London, Feb. 24, 1812.

"Dear Sir,

"The General Committee of Privileges are informed, by letters from various parts of the country, that considerable uneasiness has been excited by the refusal of Magistrates to administer the oaths, under the Act of Toleration, to several of our Preachers, and by the threatening of some persons to enforce the penalties of the Conventicle and other obsolete Acts, on our peaceable Societies.

"As many of our friends in the country wish for directions how to act under present circumstances, we say, Go on in the name of the Lord, just as you have done,—fearing God,—honouring the King,—working righteousness,—and endeavouring by all means to flee from the wrath to come.

"We most heartily respect the laws of our country, but we hold it as an unalienable right of conscience, that every man should be allowed to teach the eternal verities of our Holy Religion to all who are willing to be taught by him; and although well-regulated Societies and Denominations of Christians will exercise their own rules for the admission of public or private teachers among themselves, yet we most tenaciously disclaim all right in the Civil Magistrate to interfere in these sacred matters, while our teachers are acting in obedience to the laws in all other respects, and preaching the sound doctrines of the purest morality, according to the Holy Scriptures.

"We are therefore decidedly and unanimously of opinion, that our Preachers, Class-leaders, Prayer-leaders, Exhorters, Visitors of the Sick, Sunday-School Teachers, &c. &c., should go on as usual, in their respective duties.

"Places for Public Worship should be registered as heretofore; but if any persons should imbibe a persecuting spirit, and choose to levy penalties on any of our unoffending people, we recommend that the latter should suffer distress on their goods, or imprisonment of their persons, rather than pay any penalties for worshipping God agreeably to the dictates of their consciences.

"If, however, we should be called to suffer, let us suffer in a Christian spirit, in all meekness; praying for our enemies, ever remembering,

that if we even give our bodies to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth us nothing."

With the following judicious paragraph, we shall conclude our extracts from the letter in question:—

"If circumstances should arise to render it necessary again to apply to Government, or ultimately to Parliament, the Committee will not fail to use every Prudential measure which may be judged expedient; and they sincerely desire an interest in the prayers of the people, that they may be directed aright. In the mean time, they would recommend our friends not to join in any petitions to Parliament, unless they receive official communications from their Committee; and we would most earnestly request, that neither Preachers nor people will publish any thing on the subject, unless it be first proposed to the Committee, who have certainly, from their general information, the best means of judging of the expediency of any measure to be adopted. But the Committee invite, and will most gladly receive, any hints from their friends in the country, and avail themselves of every offer of service in the great cause for which they are so zealously engaged."

On the 21st of March, Mr. Benson expresses his gratitude to God for having enabled him to finish his Commentary on the historical Books of the Old Testament. "I find," says he, "it gives general satisfaction. We now sell seven thousand copies, partly of folio, but chiefly of the quarto; and we only print ten thousand. And, as the sale is still increasing, I hope the whole will soon be sold."

This expectation, though then a very reasonable one, was not altogether well founded; for, though the Commentary is a capital one, giving general satisfaction, yet, through its being extended far beyond the original proposals, in addition to the badness of trade, some of the first subscribers ceased to take it in.

It is highly dangerous for any to read Deistical works, previous to their minds being well furnished with such arguments as prove the truth and certainty of Christianity. Nor, indeed, after they are in possession of those arguments, ought they, unless with a design to answer it, to peruse any work which, either openly or covertly, is levelled against Christianity. That blessed religion has been proved a thousand times to have truth for its basis; why, then, should any who know this to be the case, spend an hour of their precious time in reading what perverted reason can urge against what they know to be true? In a country like this, where Gospel light shines so clearly, men, in order to continue infidels, must deliberately prefer darkness to light; and that they do, "because their deeds are evil." On the 5th of April, a character of this

description made a part of Mr. Benson's congregation. But let us hear himself upon the subject.

"April 5. Being requested by a friend to preach on a subject at St. George's in the East, this morning, which would give me an occasion to show the truth of Christianity, on account of a Deist, who had promised to attend, I discoursed on Acts iv. 33. I was favoured with a measure of liberty in speaking; and, whether he was convinced or not, I am sure the truth of Christianity was proved to a demonstration."

On the night of the 12th of May, Mr. Benson notices that the Right Honourable Mr. Perceval had been assassinated, about five o'clock in the evening of the preceding day, as he entered the lobby of the House of Commons, being shot dead with a pistol, by a wretch of the name of *Bellingham*, who pretended that the Government had not rewarded him for some services which, he said, he had performed in Russia. This fell deed excited the grief and indignation of every well-wisher to his country; for the victim sacrificed was a man of superior powers, and, hence, well qualified for steering the helm of State at this eventual era. "He had," says Mr. Benson, "pledged himself to bring into the House of Commons a Bill, to secure us and the Dissenters the privileges of the Toleration Act, in opposition to the new construction put upon it, in some late trials in the Court of King's Bench."

About this time, Mr. Benson was so engaged in writing his Commentary, together with his filling the office of Editor, that, though the Conference allowed him an Assistant, who had the honour of his friendship and approbation during six years, yet, unless when he made excursions to the country, he seldom preached, except on Sundays. These to him were generally days of excessive labour. How few, at his time of life, could have laboured as he did on the 7th of June!

"In the morning I walked to Chelsea, (about six miles) and preached, for the first time, in their new chapel, with which I was much pleased. The congregation, however, by no means, filled it. After meeting two classes, I went a mile or two further to dine, and then walked to Queen-Street to preach in the evening. The day being hot, I was a little fatigued. However, after resting a little, and taking tea, I was much refreshed. At six o'clock, I preached with comfort to a very crowded congregation. After preaching, at Mr. Butterworth's desire I read to the congregation an account of the conversation which the Rev. Mr. Wilson had had with *Bellingham*, the assassin of Mr. Perceval, in his cell in Newgate, before he was executed. It appears he did not die a penitent, but quite hardened."

Having mentioned, under date June 22, that his second daughter had been very unwell throughout the day; that in the evening, she had a dreadful attack of the spasms, attended with a severe cramp, and that

she continued for three hours in a very dangerous state; Mr. Benson, who was feelingly alive to the temporal and eternal interests of his children, adds, "May she be supported under this affliction, and may it be sanctified to us all!"

His daughter being a little recovered from her severe illness, he set out on the 23d of June, accompanied by his friend, Mr. Reece, for Tunbridge Wells, in order to open a new chapel there. He observes, with apparent pleasure, that having had the coach to themselves the greatest part of the way, they "had very agreeable conversation." He then adds, "We met with a most kind and friendly reception from Miss Fr. Leveson Gower, whom the Lord has made a great blessing in the place."

At the close of June 24, Mr. Benson expresses himself thus; "Blessed be the Lord, we have had a remarkably good day. The little chapel, which will hold about four hundred people, was completely filled three times. In the morning, I preached on Rom. i. 16, and in the evening on Luke xxiv. 47. I was much assisted both times, but especially in the evening. Mr. Reece, in the afternoon, gave us a very good sermon on Christian zeal, from Gal. iv. 18."

Under date June 25, we find the following interesting paragraph:—

"I thank God, Mr. Reece and I had a pleasant journey to town this morning, and agreeable company in the coach. But when I arrived at home, I found that my daughter had had another violent attack of the spasms, after I went away on Tuesday, in which she was in great danger of entirely losing her breath. She is now very weak, but comfortable in her mind. 'O Father!' said she to me, 'if I had died, I should have gone to the Lord. He has greatly comforted me of late, and has been preparing me for this trial; and, blessed be his name, he now comforts me. O, what cause have I to be thankful for this affliction!'"

It was not reserved for Lord Stanhope to have the honour of being a principal instrument in effecting the repeal of the Conventicle and Five-Mile Act, and other Acts inimical to religious liberty. This was, if not *formally*, yet *substantially*, done by a Bill, brought shortly after into Parliament by his Majesty's Ministers. Mr. Benson, accompanied by Dr. Hamilton, went to the House of Lords on the evening of July 3, to hear the debate on the Bill proposed by that Noble Lord, for the repealing of the Acts in question. "He spoke," says Mr. Benson, "for upwards of two hours, and with great readiness and fluency. But he introduced so much extraneous matter, and dwelt so long on circumstances which did not bear upon the point, that his speech, though upon the whole interesting, became tedious, and failed of the designed effect.

These observations are worthy the attention of all public speakers, whose intention it is to *persuade*, as well as to *inform*. How few are there of whom it may be said, as of a great man, introduced by Homer,

"His words succinct and full, without a fault,
He spake no more than just the thing he ought!"

Stanhope, in the case referred to, said many good things, and said them well; but his mixing them with extraneous matter, in addition to his rather democratical principles, prevented, at that time, the success of the measure he proposed. It is highly to the credit of the British Legislature, that, in general, it is cool and deliberate in all its enactments; and that such men as strenuously endeavour to carry the abstract *theory* of civil liberty so into effect, as is incompatible with practical liberty, incur its censure.

Mr. Benson, accompanied by Mr. Stephens, after a pleasant journey, arrived in the neighbourhood of Gravesend, on the 6th of July, having consented to open a new chapel at that town on the day following. "In the forenoon," he says, "I preached with much liberty on 1 Cor. iii. 11—13. Mr. Stephens preached in the afternoon on our Lord's raising the widow of Nain's son, from Luke vii. 11. In the evening I preached again, when my subject was Luke xv. 7. The chapel was crowded with very attentive hearers, and the Lord again favoured me with much enlargement of mind, and liberty of speech."

This year the Conference began at Leeds in the morning of the 27th of July. Mr. Joseph Entwisle was chosen President, and Dr. Coke Secretary. On his way to this Conference, Mr. Benson, accompanied by his daughter, to whom, for the sake of her health, such a journey was recommended by Dr. Hamilton, and her brother, who is a medical gentleman, arrived at Sheffield on July 24. As usual, he made his kind friend Holy's house his home during his stay at Sheffield. Such was his daughter's indisposition on the journey, that some apprehensions were entertained lest she should not survive it. "I am thankful to the Lord," he remarks, "that she has not died on her journey, and that hitherto he hath helped us."

Eternity alone will fully display all the blessed effects produced by the instrumentality of Mr. Benson's great ministerial labours. The 26th of July was to him a day both of labour and consolation. "I have," says he, "preached twice this day at Carver-Street Chapel, (Sheffield) and each time to a congregation of not less, I think, than two thousand or two thousand and five hundred hearers, who were all still as night, and many much affected. The Lord filled my mouth with arguments, and enabled me to bear a faithful testimony to the truth, such as I believe many felt. O that the good impressions made, may not die away, but produce a lasting effect!"

On the 28th of July, Mr. Benson's daughter was so far recovered, as to render it practicable for her to accompany him to Leeds.

In the forenoon of August 2, Mr. Benson preached at Holbeck, in the vicinity of Leeds. The chapel was excessively crowded. His subject was 2 Cor. v. 14, 15; and while he informed the listening multitude what is to be understood by "The love of Christ constraineth us," many were much impressed. Having to preach at Albion-Street Chapel at six o'clock in the evening, although he went there an hour before the time, such was the eagerness of multitudes to hear him, that it was with difficulty he could press through the crowd into the pulpit. And after the chapel was completely filled, such great numbers pressed to the place, that three very large congregations were formed in different parts of the street, to which three of the Preachers preached, by the singing of one of which congregations, that was near the chapel, and even by the Preacher's voice while preaching, the congregation in the chapel was no little disturbed.

A case similar to this occurred at Liverpool, at the last Conference held there, when by the singing of two congregations in the vicinity of Brunswick Chapel, together with the voices of the preachers while addressing the people, the very able discourse delivered by the Rev. Jabez Bunting, in his official capacity as President of the Conference, lost much of its effect. The recurrence of such cases ought to be guarded against.

In the evening of August 6, according to notice, Mr. Benson preached at the Old Chapel, on Matt. v. 13; the congregation, composed of Preachers and people, was crowded. "All," says he, "were attentive, and, I hope, I was enabled to bear a faithful testimony to the truth. May it produce a lasting good effect!"

Mr. Benson, on the forenoon of August 13, set out in a chaise, accompanied by his daughter, for Sheffield. About seven in the evening, according to appointment, he preached in Norfolk-Street Chapel, which, he observes, "was nearly full of attentive hearers."

In the evening of August 18, he, together with his daughter, who had been much indisposed in the course of their journey, arrived at home in safety. "Blessed be the Lord," says he, "for bringing us safe home O that he may sanctify this dispensation of his providence to the profit of us all."

Perhaps in few, if any instances, do the religion and humanity of heads of families shine more conspicuously, than in the affection and tenderness which they manifest to their servants when labouring under affliction.—Those humble friends, whose services are essential to the existence of civil and polished life, are often, when rendered, by bodily indisposition, incapable, even for a few days, of rendering their usual services, looked upon as a great encumbrance, and treated with indifference.

The affliction of Mr. Benson's servant, which he mentions under date December 7, was, it appears, a great trial to him and the rest of his

family, circumstanced as they were at that time, yet, in her affliction, he acknowledged Divine Providence; and so far was he from treating her with indifference, that he allowed one of his daughters to wait upon her, though her doing so was at the expense of bringing home another, who had been attending upon her afflicted sister.

It would be highly pleasing to us, and no doubt to the generality of our readers, regularly to follow Mr. Benson in his career of ministerial usefulness; but our limits oblige us to omit numberless passages worthy the most extensive circulation.

Having noticed the watch-night, with which they concluded the past year, Mr. Benson says; "I thank the Lord, I am still resolved that my body, soul, and spirit, my time and talents, shall be devoted to and employed for him."

So high did he stand in the estimation of the religious public, for his piety, wisdom, and prudence, that considerable sums of money were occasionally put into his hands, that he might distribute them amongst such objects of charity as he chose to select.

On the 17th of January 1813, he says; "An unknown friend called upon me one evening lately, and gave me £45 to distribute in charity among the poor." After mentioning how he had disposed of most of that sum, he adds, in relation to the friend from whom he received it, "His care is to do good in secret; and, blessed be God, I have met many such of late."

On the evening of May 9, he preached at Hammersmith, a sermon on the occasion of the death of Mr. William Williams, a man of uncommon religious, moral, and intellectual worth. "I hope," Mr. Benson remarks, "that his death will be made the means of spiritual good to many, and of increasing the congregation, which has generally been small since the chapel has been opened."

Mr. Benson, on his way to Wednesbury, where he had appointed to open a new chapel, preached at Coventry, on the evening of May 14, with great freedom of heart and liberty of expression; and on the forenoon of the following day, he arrived at Wednesbury. After dinner he took a view of the chapel. "It is," he observes, "most pleasantly situated on the side of a hill fronting the west, and very conspicuous from the road leading from Birmingham. It has a charming circular gallery, capable of seating, probably, near four hundred people. The body of the chapel below is chiefly intended for the accommodation of the poor, and therefore is not filled up with pews, except a certain space to the right and left of the pulpit. The whole chapel will comfortably contain twelve or thirteen hundred people. The building cost only £1900, and the ground £200."

On May 16, Mr. Benson preached both in the morning and evening in the chapel now described; Mr. Morely preached in the afternoon.—"The Lord," says Mr. Benson, "was pleased to assist us in preach-

ing; and to our astonishment, the sum collected, including a few pounds given at Dudley next day, amounted to £230: and this chiefly from colliers and gun-lock-makers!" Yes! this was astonishing! and sufficient to put to the blush, many professors of piety who abound in wealth!

Mr. Benson having preached on the 17th and 18th of May, to crowded congregations at Bilstone and Dudley, observes, "I was surprised to see the change in this country since the year 1790, when I was in the Birmingham circuit. Through the whole country, from Birmingham to Wolverhampton, from south to north, about fifteen miles, and for ten miles from east to west, we have a chapel every mile and a half, or every two or three miles. This hath God wrought! This, under God, is the fruit of our people's taking joyfully the spoiling of their goods at Wednesday, and the neighbouring places, 1743 and 1744."

After having preached at Birmingham, Coventry, and Towcester, on his return to London, he arrived there in safety on the 20th of May.

Much as Mr. Benson's presence was desired both by Preachers and people at every Conference, yet he frequently declined, in that particular, to gratify their wishes; not from any unkind or unbrotherly disposition, but from motives which reason and conscience approve, and which eternity will justify. For his not attending the Conference which was held at Liverpool this year, he assigns the following reasons:—

"July 25. Having, as I have thought, no particular call to go to Conference, and wishing to save all the time possible for my Commentary on the Bible, and the rather as I have now entered upon the Book of Isaiah, I have determined to stay quietly at home, and go on with my work. I was so peculiarly assisted in preaching to a large congregation, both forenoon and evening, at the City-Road, that I cannot doubt of my having done right, in making this determination. I shall get forward with my Bible, and redeem the time I lost in going into Staffordshire; I shall be useful, I hope, in preaching, Mr. Myles only being left in the circuit; and I shall save myself much fatigue of body and vexation of mind. Blessed be the Lord for his goodness!"

Mr. Benson's unwillingness to suffer the people at the places where he preached to be at the expense of coach-hire for him, caused him often, especially in the decline of life, to labour beyond his strength. This was the case on the 5th of September, when at Hinde-Street he read prayers, preached twice, and administered the Lord's Supper. "Having walked," says he, "about ten miles, and been upon my feet in the pulpit, and in administering the Sacrament, five hours at least, I found myself a little weary when I arrived at home."

Having mentioned under date January 1, 1814, several particulars relative to a severe affliction, under which one of his daughters laboured at that time, Mr. Benson, with his wonted piety and good sense, adds: "Thus it has pleased the Lord that we should conclude one year and

begin another, under his chastising hand. May the trying dispensation be sanctified to her, and to the whole family ! As he is thus trying and pruning us, may we bear more fruit to his glory !”

The 2d of January may be ranked amongst Mr. Benson’s most laborious days. At eleven o’clock in the forenoon, he began to read prayers at Hinde-Street, after which he preached ; the service continued till after one o’clock. At half past two he kept a meeting at the chapel for the renewing of the covenant ; it was after four when this service was concluded. He then administered the Lord’s Supper to about five hundred communicants. “ I had not finished,” he observes, “ till near six. I preached again at seven to a large congregation, and I concluded about half past eight. I was much assisted in every part of the service during the day ; and I trust many were edified, quickened, and comforted.—Many at the covenant-meeting were much affected.”

Under date January 22, Mr. Benson records the following anecdote taken from an Amsterdam paper of the 10th. “ An eye witness relates the following. When the Field-Marshal Prince Schwartzburgh observed the defeat of the French, after three days fighting at Leipsick, he was anxious to convey the tidings himself to his Sovereign, the Emperor of Austria, who, together with the Emperor of Russia and King of Prussia, was stationed upon a height about two miles from the field of battle. The Field-Marshal galloped up at full speed, and, saluting the Emperor with his sword, said, ‘ Your Majesty, the battle is at an end ; the enemy is beaten at all points ; they flee ; the victory is ours.’ The Emperor raised his eyes to heaven, and a tear was his answer : then dismounting from his horse, and having deposited his hat and sword upon the ground, he fell on his kness, and aloud returned thanks to God. This example was followed by the other two Monarchs, who, having also kneeled, said, ‘ Brother, the Lord is with us ;’ at the same instant, all the other officers in attendance, as well as the guards, kneeled down, and for several minutes a dead silence reigned ; after which more than a hundred voices cried, ‘ The Lord is with us !’ The sight of the three crowned heads accompanied by a great number of distinguished warriors, kneeling under the canopy of heaven, and with tears praising God, was most affecting.”

From the effects of the defeat of the French at Leipsick, a defeat for which the nations of the earth ought to be thankful, they never recovered. They had then nearly run their long race of madness and of crime ; and the people that had raised and pulled down Monarchies, were, by the very powers, with Great Britain at their head, to whom they had so insolently dictated on what conditions they would suffer them to exist, brought into the most abject state of humiliation.

At a later date, having briefly mentioned, that the Allies had obtained a succession of victories over the French, but particularly in a great battle fought near Paris on the 30th of March, and that Paris had capitula-

ted, Mr. Benson adds: "Thus has NAPOLEON's mighty power come down more rapidly than it rose, and retaliating justice is avenging upon him and the French people the injuries which all the nations of Europe have sustained from them for twenty years past."

From viewing scenes of war and bloodshed, we gladly turn our attention to the contents of the following paragraph, in which Mr. Benson records three instances of true benevolence.

"January 24. This evening, the same friend, whom I do not know, that two years ago left with me £20 to be distributed at my discretion to the poor, and who last year left with me £45, saying the Lord had prospered him, called upon me, and left with me £70 for the same purpose, and said, 'The more I give the Lord, he blesses me the more.' I wished to know his name, but he declined giving it me. Blessed be the Lord, that there are those to be found who do such extensive good, and yet wish not to be known to do it; in this conscientiously and exactly obeying Christ's command in Matt. vi. 1—4."

With such large hearted, generous men, as the friend now mentioned, who for years, made Mr. Benson an almoner of a part of his bounty, the world does not abound, though the present may be termed a very liberal and benevolent age.

The following is Mr. Benson's account of his labours on the 17th of April.

"This morning I walked to Chelsea, where I read prayers, preached, and administered the Lord's Supper in the forenoon with much comfort. In the evening I preached again, and was favoured with peculiar liberty and enlargement. Afterwards I walked home, and thereby walked upon the whole at least *fourteen* miles, besides performing the other services in which I engaged. I thank God for giving me such strength and health in my advanced age."

At the City-Road on the forenoon of June 19, Mr. Benson preached from 1 John iii. 24, and was "peculiarly assisted in bearing testimony to the indwelling presence of God in his people, and the marks whereby they might know it." Having thus expressed himself, he proceeds to notice that many people had at that time flocked from all parts of the kingdom, to see those illustrious personages, the Emperor of Russia, the King of Prussia, Bulcher, Platoff, &c. He adds, "I saw it my duty to give the congregation a caution on the subject, and to call their attention to more solid and durable happiness." Then he adds, "I thank God I have not felt the least desire to see any of those sights which have drawn together so many thousands."

The Conference was held at Bristol this year: but though Mr. Benson attended it, he did not leave London till after the Sunday which preceded its commencement. On that day, which was the 24th of July, he divided his labours betwixt the City-Road Chapel, and St. George's in the

East. On both those occasions, he observes, that he was favoured with much liberty and comfort. He then says, "I believe I have been in my place to-day, and that I acted properly in staying in town, instead of hurrying away to Conference."

In the afternoon of July 26, he, accompanied by the Author of this Memoir, and two other Preachers, set off by coach for Bristol, where he arrived early in the afternoon of the following day.

On the 31st of July, Dr. Clarke, whose place it was, as President of the Conference, to preach at the principal chapel in the evening, before the preachers, prevailed upon Mr. Benson to take his place on that occasion. The Doctor preached in the forenoon to the congregation, to which Mr. Benson would have preached, had he not consented to take the pulpit in the evening.

"The chapel," Mr. Benson remarks, "was exceedingly crowded; indeed there were far more people than could get in. My text was 2 Cor. iv. 5, 6; and the Lord greatly assisted me, so that I hope the word was not spoken in vain. I was enabled, I trust, to deal faithfully with the Preachers and people, and to deliver my own soul. The congregation was indeed, very attentive, and many were affected."

In the forenoon of August 7, he preached to a crowded congregation of Preachers and people at Guinea-Street Chapel. His subject was 2 Tim. ii. 19—21. The Lord favoured him with peculiar "liberty and enlargement in speaking." In the evening, at Portland Chapel, he addressed a thronged audience; his subject was Isa xi. 10. "But," he says, "I did not find so much liberty in speaking as in the morning; not having had sufficient time for retirement in the afternoon. I was much dissatisfied with myself and my sermon."

On the evening of August 10, the Conference ended in peace and harmony.

At this Conference a dutiful and loyal Address to His Royal Highness the Prince Regent was voted; which, with a letter from the President, Dr. Clarke, was forwarded on the 7th of September, to the Right Honourable LORD VISCOUNT SIDMOUTH, Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department, requesting that his Lordship would have the goodness to present the Address to His Royal Highness.

On the 9th, his Lordship forwarded to Dr. Clarke the following obliging answer:

"Whitehall, 9th September, 1814.

"Sir,

"I have had the honour to lay before the Prince Regent, the very loyal and dutiful Address of the Ministers of the people called Methodists, belonging to the Religious Societies first established by the Rev. John Wesley, deceased,—transmitted to me with your letter of the 7th instant.

And I have the satisfaction to acquaint you, that His Royal Highness was pleased to receive the same in the most gracious manner.

“I have the honour to be, Sir, &c.

“SIDMOUTH.”

As specimens of the Address in question, which is equally replete with good sense and loyal principles, we transcribe the following passages.

“We gladly avail ourselves of this opportunity to assure your Royal Highness, that both we and the numerous Societies whom we represent, are firmly and unalterably attached to the excellent Constitution of our Country; and that in sentiments of loyal and affectionate respect for the Person, the Family, and the Government of our venerable Sovereign, we are not behind any other class of his Majesty’s subjects.

“With our prayers we shall not fail to continue, as we have ever done, our strenuous exhortations to the people of our charge, that they may be taught, both by our precepts and example, while they fear God, to honour the King, and to adorn our holy religion by an uniformly peaceable demeanour, and by a cheerful subjection to lawful authority.

“In these principles of Christian loyalty, we were, as a religious body, carefully instructed by the Founder of our Societies; they are embodied in our standing rules of discipline; and we are confirmed in our adherence to them, by our thankful recollection of the privileges which we enjoy.”

At the earnest request of Mrs. Mayer, of Cale-Green, near Stockport, her son, and many other friends, Mr. Benson consented to go to Stockport, in order to preach a sermon on account of the death of his old excellent friend, Mr. Matthew Mayer, who had, for a long series of years, been a very respectable Local Preacher, and had, through every stage of his long Christian course, adorned the doctrine of God his Saviour. Having arrived at Cale-Green, he preached in the morning of the 11th of December, in the Hill-Gate Chapel, Stockport, to a crowded audience, on the occasion of Mr. Mayer’s death, from 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. He was favoured with much freedom upon the occasion; and both himself and the congregation were much affected. Again in the evening he addressed a congregation, consisting of not less than three thousand hearers, in a large room belonging to the Stockport Sunday School. His text was Rev. xx. 11, 12. “The Lord,” says he, “favoured me with peculiar liberty. It was indeed one of the most solemn times I ever had. May the effect be lasting!”

On the 18th of December, Mr. Benson preached twice in Oldham-Street Chapel, Manchester. In the forenoon that very large chapel was completely filled, when he observes, “I was favoured with peculiar liberty and enlargement. In the evening, before it was quite time to begin, the chapel was so completely filled, that, in order to prevent confusion,

it was judged prudent to shut the doors, and lock the iron gates which separate between the street and the chapel-yard, and to admit no more; hence many hundreds were excluded. The greatest order was preserved within, and seriousness and solemnity were apparent throughout the whole congregation."

Visiting Leicester on his return, at Mr. Hall's request he preached in the chapel occupied by that able and eloquent Preacher of the Gospel. "We had," says Mr. Benson, "both Baptists and Methodists, and I was enabled to preach with liberty and comfort on 1 John v. 11, 12.—The congregation was very attentive, and I trust did not hear in vain."

Not being able to obtain an inside place in any of the morning coaches from Leicester, (December 22d,) Mr. Benson travelled outside to within about six miles of London. On his safe arrival at home he says, "I have the comfort of finding our servant, whom I left ill, quite recovered, and all the rest of the family well. Blessed be God for all his mercies!"

On January 1, 1815, he says, "To-day I have preached twice at Westminster, kept a covenant-meeting, and administered the Lord's-Supper. In the morning my subject was Rom. xii. 1, and in the evening Joshua xxiv. 15. I thank God I was much assisted both times. At the covenant-meeting in the afternoon, and the Lord's Supper afterwards, we had a very affecting and precious opportunity. Many, I believe, were greatly refreshed."

At Lambeth, in the forenoon of January 15, Mr. Benson preached from Luke i. 74, 75. The following is the judicious manner in which he treated that subject. "I endeavoured to show, 1. What is necessary to be done for us, in order to our *serving God acceptably*, viz. that we must be delivered out of the hands of our enemies; 2. The nature of that service,—That it must be *without fear*, &c. 3. That the whole, viz. our deliverance out of the hands of our enemies, and inclination and power to serve God, are of grace,—*That he would grant*," &c.

From these outlines of his sermon, the pious and intelligent reader will readily discern that his views of the doctrines of grace and justice were correct, because scriptural.

On the evening of February 19, after preaching at City-Road Chapel, he read to the very large congregation several important letters, recently come to hand from some of the Methodist Missionaries stationed in Ceylon. "The Lord," he remarks, "seems in a very extraordinary way to have opened a door for their usefulness." Having thus expressed himself, in consistency with his habit of referring every thing, but sin, to God, he says; "The death of Dr. Coke, instead of proving the ruin of the Mission, seems to have been over-ruled greatly for the furtherance of it."

In theory it would appear impossible for any man, without destroying his health in a short time, to be so confined to his labours of the pen, as

Mr. Benson was while writing his Commentary on the Holy Scriptures. But did he glory in himself, on account of his extraordinary exertions? This he was so far from doing, that he ascribed to the Lord all his physical and mental, as well as spiritual strength.

The progress which he had been enabled to make in his great work, he gratefully notices under date March 23. "I bless God, I this morning finished my Commentary on the Old Testament, having been employed in it since November 1809, and not having a line written before. The Lord has greatly assisted me and preserved me in health, though I have generally been employed at it from five in the morning till nine or ten at night, and frequently have not gone out of the chapel-yard during the whole week, except on the Lord's day, when I always have preaching and walking enough. What reason have I to praise the Lord for his goodness!"

Under date March 27, he notices Bonaparte's escape from the island of Elba, his return to France, and his rapid progress to Paris; where, by its fickle inhabitants, he was received with joyful acclamations. Apprehending that another sanguinary war would be the consequence of so extraordinary and unexpected an event, he says; "O God! how terrible art thou in thy judgments!"

Mr. Benson could very rarely be prevailed upon to travel by coach to any of his appointments to which he could possibly walk. Hence, on the 2d of July, he walked to and from Deptford, (at least ten miles,) in addition to his preaching there twice, reading prayers, and administering the Lord's Supper. After this day's labour, abundantly too much for a man at his advanced age, he simply says, "When I arrived at home, I found myself a little fatigued."

Surely so laborious a man, as a Preacher, a Pastor, and an Author, has seldom appeared upon the stage of life.

On the evening of October 4, Mrs. Mather, one of Mr. Benson's daughters, after having had no use of her feet for more than twelve months, obtained such sudden relief, in answer to prayer being offered to God in her behalf, by her father and another Minister, that she was enabled, in an instant, to rise and walk, as if she had never been affected with lameness. Her father, her husband, Mrs. Dickinson, Mrs. Tooth, and the writer of this Memoir, were present upon the occasion. They all believed that the power to walk which she received in an instant, was communicated by an immediate act of Omnipotence. We simply mention the fact in question, without entering into a dispute with such infidels or skeptics as absurdly maintain, that the proof of an extraordinary interposition of Providence is impossible.

On the forenoon of November 29, the novel spectacle of a Royal Duke in a Methodist Chapel was exhibited at City-Road. The late much-lamented Duke of Kent, together with the Lord-Mayor and other

distinguished personages were present upon the occasion. Dr. Collyer preached a sermon in aid of the British and Foreign Schools, and one on the Lancasterian plan in the neighbourhood. The Duke of Kent, who was the great patron and friend of charitable institutions, previous to the opening of the service, conversed condescendingly and affably with those respectable individuals who waited in the vestry to receive His Royal Highness. The crowd assembled was much greater than the chapel could contain. "The service," says Mr. Benson, "was performed in a very solemn manner; and all present seemed to be attentive." He then adds, "The sermon was excellent; and the collection amounted to £117."

On the 31st of December, Mr. Benson preached both in the forenoon and evening at the City-Road Chapel. "The congregations," he says, "were very large, and the Lord enabled me to speak with liberty and enlargement both times." He concluded the evening service at half past seven; and as it was the last night of the year, a watch-night commenced at ten o'clock, which was continued, according to custom, till the commencement of the new year. "The greatest part of the work," says Mr. Benson, "lay upon me; but the Lord graciously assisted me; and we had a very solemn meeting."

1816.—As we proceed towards the close of this work, we are under the necessity, in order to its being comprised in one volume, to pass over in silence many particulars worthy of record, relative to Mr. Benson.

Being at Cambridge on the 14th of March, he preached in the little Methodist Chapel erected about half a mile from the town. The existence of that chapel is under God, owing to William Beacock, a Plasterer. He was not a native of Cambridge, but went there to follow his calling; and finding the Methodists few in number, and without a chapel, he determined, if possible, to have one erected. He stated this to some pious friends, from whom he received no encouragement; but others, entering into his views, rendered him every assistance in their power. "In the spring of 1815," says Mr. Benson, "he purchased a piece of ground, and agreed for building materials, which were immediately supplied. He proceeded to build; toiled most indefatigably; and soon, to the astonishment of all, completed the chapel, having, with his own hands, and frequently without the help of a labourer, done the work of bricklayer, plasterer, and slater; and this he did while he steadily refused to make any charge whatever for his labour; nay, in addition to this, he subscribed five pounds. This, however, the trustees of the chapel refused to accept, and made him a small present, which yielding to their importunity, he accepted."

The forenoon of March 15, Mr. Benson spent in viewing the Colleges and the situation of the town of Cambridge. "The buildings, in general,"

he observes, "are inferior to those at Oxford. The chapel, however, belonging to King's College, is a very beautiful and grand building, equal certainly to any in Oxford; nay, it is supposed to be one of the finest pieces of Gothic architecture now remaining in the world."

On the 17th of March, it being the anniversary of the opening of the chapel at Lynn, Mr. Benson preached there, three times. On the 18th he proceeded to Swaffham, on the 19th to Norwich, and on the 21st to Yarmouth; at each of which places he preached the word with comfort to himself, and much apparent success. And having returned to Norwich on the 23d of March, he preached there thrice on the 24th, to use his own words, "with liberty and comfort." Before nine o'clock in the evening of the 25th, he arrived safe in London.

In reference to his labours in the forenoon and evening of the 14th of April, which this year was Easter-day, Mr. Benson says; "I was neither peculiarly assisted nor particularly left destitute of help from God."

In the forenoon of Sunday, May 26, he preached to a large congregation at Bath; and in the evening, at a chapel in King's-Street, Bristol, he delivered a discourse from John xvii. 37, as preparatory to an intended Missionary Meeting. "The chapel," says he, "was exceedingly crowded, and the Lord favoured me with much liberty in speaking." Indeed, knowing how acceptable his ministry in that city was to the people at large, his Brethren prevailed upon him to preach again at different chapels, on the two following days.

At the Bristol Methodist Missionary Meeting, which commenced in the forenoon of May 29, Mr. Benson was called to preside. The meeting did not conclude till after four o'clock; after which, having dined with his excellent friend, Mrs. Wait, Mr. Benson, accompanied by some friends, proceeded to Bath, in order to open the new chapel the next morning.

The service was begun in that chapel at half past ten in the forenoon; Mr. Samuel Taylor reading prayers. Afterwards Mr. Benson preached to a crowded congregation on Rom. i. 16. "The Lord," he remarks, "greatly assisted me, and a blessed influence appeared to rest on the people." Having thus expressed himself, he adds, "The chapel was completely filled again at half past two, when Mr. Robert Newton preached an eloquent and scriptural sermon on salvation by grace through faith, from Eph. ii. 8, 9; in which he showed, with great clearness, that salvation must be by grace, and could not be in any other way. At six in the evening the chapel was filled a third time, when Mr. Bunting delivered a very instructive discourse on Heb. iv. 14." The sums collected in the course of the day, with the addition of some donations sent afterwards, amounted to about £300.

The annual Conference commenced on Monday, July 29, at City-Road Chapel, London.

The following is an abstract of Mr Benson's account of two Prussian Ministers, sons of the aged and pious Bishop of Berlin. They came to England, chiefly to gain information concerning its religious institutions. They had heard many contradictory reports concerning the Methodists; and, wishing for certain information relative to them, Mr. Butterworth, in order to their obtaining it, politely sent them in his carriage, accompanied by Mr. Robert Newton, to City-Road, where they were admitted into the Conference in the morning of the 10th of August. The Conference readily and affectionately received them; and on their taking their seats they were addressed by MR. REECE, the President, on the nature and design of the Methodist institution. Mr. Benson, Mr. Henry Moore, and Dr. Clarke, spoke to them on the same subject; especially respecting the doctrine and discipline of the Methodists. They appeared to be highly gratified by the information they received; and expressed a hope that the Methodists would form a band of union between the truly pious of the Established Church, and those among the Dissenters of different denominations. They gave the Conference an account of a revival of vital religion in Prussia, and some parts of Germany.

The Conference having repeatedly and importunately requested Mr. Benson to preach to them and the people at the City-Road Chapel, he at last consented, and preached there in the evening of August 11. The congregation was crowded, and the great body of Preachers were present. His subject was 2 Cor. iii. 5, 6; "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; who hath made us able Ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life."—"The Lord," he remarks, "favoured me with peculiar liberty and enlargement."

On the morning of August 12, the Conference unanimously requested him to publish the discourse they had heard him deliver the preceding evening.

On November 3, Mr. Benson says, "At Southwark we had a precious season this forenoon while I was discoursing on John iv. 23, 24. 'The true worshippers worship the Father in spirit and truth,' &c. Alas! how little of this true worship is there in most Christian congregations! How much formality, lukewarmness, and even deadness! How little adoration of Jehovah's matchless glories! How little reverence for his boundless power! How little humiliation and abasement before his unspotted purity and impartial justice! How little confidence in his never-failing mercy! How little love to him for his unspeakable love to us! How little sincere, fervent desire for the blessings we ask in prayer, or faith in God's promises respecting them! How little gratitude for his numberless benefits, when we give him thanks! And in hearing his word, how little is the word received in faith and in the love of it, and how many are *hearers only* and not doers of the word!"

Our limits prohibit our saying much of Mr. Benson's important and incessant labours in the year 1817.

January 5, was to him a day of extraordinary labour. After walking to Hinde-Street, a distance of about four miles, he was engaged in reading prayers and preaching from eleven o'clock until past one. At half past two he began a meeting for the renewing of the Covenant; this meeting was continued till four o'clock. From that time till half past five, about five hundred communicants being present, he was engaged in administering the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. About half past six, he preached again, to use his own words, "with peculiar freedom." On his return home, he says, "Blessed be the Lord for the help afforded me on this first Sabbath of the new year!"

We find that the 9th of February being appointed for the opening of the new chapel at Woolwich, Mr. Benson preached there in the forenoon. His subject was 1 John i. 3. "I preached," he observes, "with much liberty."

It must have been highly edifying as well as delightful to hear Mr. Benson on the 9th of March, at Westminster, discourse in the forenoon from Luke xx. 17, 18, and in the evening from 1 Cor. iii. 11—13. In preaching from such passages as these, he frequently excelled himself. But with whatever edification and delight he was heard upon both those occasions, his discourse in the evening fell partly under his own censure. "Being engaged," he says, "the whole afternoon in meeting classes, and not having been able to get any time for meditation; I did not speak with as much satisfaction to myself, as I generally have done when discoursing on the words, *Other foundation, &c.*"

That Mr. Benson, notwithstanding his thorough acquaintance with Divinity, and his having often preached with clearness, ease, and energy, upon all its doctrines, precepts, promises, and threatenings, still continued to trust in divine aid, in order to succeed in the pulpit, we find numberless proofs in his Journal. One of these occurs under date March 30. Having noticed that in the forenoon of that day, he was enabled at the City-Road Chapel, to speak with much freedom and enlargement of mind, but in the evening he was rather straitened, he adds, with his wonted wisdom and piety, "Thus the Lord teaches me my dependence on him continually. O that I may be more fully saved from all confidence in the flesh, and may look to, and always trust in him!"

His uncommon talents for the Ministry, joined to his habitual trust in God for divine assistance, together with his strong devotional feelings, enable us to account for his popularity, as a Preacher, as long as he was able to ascend the pulpit.

At every Conference, his presence was earnestly and universally desired by both Preachers and people; but he frequently, as we have seen, from motives, of which his well-informed judgment and conscience ap-

proved, declined to gratify their wishes. The Conference this year commenced at Sheffield, on July 27. For some time, Mr. Benson hesitated whether he should attend it; but finding that the City-Road Chapel would probably, if he did, be *once* without a Preacher, and Lambeth Chapel *twice*, he deemed it his duty, by remaining in London, and preaching in both those places, to prevent the congregations from being disappointed.

The new chapel in Great Queen-Street, London, the most ornamented and elegant, and probably the largest in the Methodist Connexion, and which cost upwards of £10,000, was opened on the 25th of September. In the forenoon of that day, Mr. Benson preached in it, at the request of the Trustees, Stewards, &c. and the Preachers of the London West Circuit. His subject was Rom. i. 16. "The chapel," he says, "was well filled, and I was assisted in speaking." Mr. Robert Newton preached in the afternoon, and Mr. Richard Watson in the evening. Of both their discourses, Mr. Benson speaks in strong and unqualified terms of approbation.

A full meeting of the Trustees, Stewards, and principal people in the vestry, after the services were concluded, requested that the three Sermons might be published.

On the forenoon of November 9, Mr. Benson delivered a discourse at Southwark chapel, on account of the sudden and much to be lamented death of the Princess Charlotte of Wales. His subject was 1 Pet. i. 24, 25.—This led him to speak of the shortness and uncertainty of human life, and the frailty of man; after doing which, he observes that he related some "anecdotes in circulation very favourable to the character of the deceased Princess."

Mr. Benson who was much in the habit of preaching occasional sermons, delivered one in the evening of November 9, at City-Road Chapel, on account of the death of Mrs. Kruse, a very pious and excellent class-leader, who had for fifty-nine years adorned her christian profession.

The following note, which came from the pen of a son, who knows how to estimate the mental, literary, moral, religious, and ministerial worth of his excellent Father, together with the letters which it introduces, cannot fail to obtain the approbation of every intelligent reader.

"TO THE REV. JAMES MACDONALD.

February 28, 1822.

"Dear Sir,

"It has occurred to me, that it might be desirable to send you a few extracts from such letters as I have preserved of my late dear and venerated Father; not so much for the matter contained in them, as to exemplify the manner in which he was accustomed to write to his children, when absent from home, and the sentiments he was wont to inculcate

upon them. These, you will observe, were in perfect harmony with his general character, and the exact but tender and affectionate care he was used at all times to take of his children. The anxiety he continually evinced for their temporal and spiritual welfare is well known to all with whom he was intimate. With respect to his plan of education, I need only observe that, occupied as he was, either as an Itinerant Preacher, or as an Editor, he was unable to give that time to his children, which he would otherwise have been disposed to do. Hence he was generally obliged to send his sons to some respectable day-schools in the towns where he was stationed, instructing them himself, as he had time, during the intervals of their absence from school. Nevertheless, when they became capable of application to higher studies, being a great economist of his time, he contrived to instruct them more himself. He grounded them well in grammatical learning, and assisted them in perusing, in their order, the classical writers of Greece and Rome. He did not make his sons repeat large portions of Virgil or Homer, as is the general practice in Grammar-Schools; but he required them to learn selections from the English Poets, as Milton, Pope, Young, &c. He delighted to explain the Scriptures to them, whilst he taught them to read those Holy Oracles in the languages in which they were written, or whilst they were read in the course of family worship, or became the subject of conversation, when sitting a little while with his family in an evening. And by all that argument, authority, and example could effect, he assiduously inculcated upon us the elevated principles, and holy duties of Christianity, with many rules for the regulation of life, economy of time, and expense, and a diligence in our providential callings.

“I have many Letters which he wrote to me from the time of my becoming an Under-graduate at Cambridge, in 1801, to the period of his decease. They are mostly written with that haste, which arose from his many engagements, and with a parental liberty of expression; but there are scarcely any of them which do not contain some excellent and seasonable advice and instruction. The following extracts will suffice to show his style, and course of remark on different occasions.

“I am yours, &c.

“JOHN BENSON.”

During my first year at College, my father wrote to me as follows.

‘My dear Son,

‘Although I can ill spare time, I must write a few lines to inquire after your health, and how you go on in your studies. I am glad you are to be examined in the Evidences of Christianity. It is certainly of infinite importance that you should understand them, and be well convinced that the grounds of your faith are solid, and such as will support all the

weight you can lay upon them. But if, in the mean time, you should cease to build on that ground, and lose any measure of the religion you possessed, it would be a bad affair, and defeat the very design you had in view in going to the University. And yet I am not without my fears, lest your young and inexperienced mind should be led astray by the acquaintances you may form. You need to have, and you must have *no intimacy* with those *that fear not God*. If I thought you formed intimacies of that kind, it would induce me to withdraw you from Cambridge; because it would be a certain sign that you had not true religion; and I am sure that a person without true religion can never be called to the ministry of the Gospel.'

"The next extract has for its subject early rising, and a proper use of time. It bears date April 4, 1804.

'I hope you will continue to rise early. But you should not fail to go to bed at a proper time in the evening, which should be between nine and ten o'clock. And you must not suffer yourself to be deprived of your time during the day by a set of idlers, who, having nothing to do themselves, or no inclination to their own proper business, make no conscience of hindering that of others. This may require some address, that you may not appear uncivil; and it will require much resolution.—But remember, you had better offend many worthless loungers, than suffer yourself to be robbed of your precious time, and prevented from making that improvement you might otherwise make. I beseech you, attend to this; for on this much depends.' "

This is the language of a man of sense and piety, who, from his residence at Oxford, and from what he could not avoid knowing of the University of Cambridge, was exquisitely sensible of the dangers to which, in point of both morals and religion, youth are exposed in those justly celebrated seats of learning.

The next extract which has been communicated by the same son bears date December 1, 1804. It is highly descriptive of Mr. Benson's habitual diligence. It runs thus:

"Although it is Saturday evening, when you know I am always peculiarly engaged, yet I must write, if it be but a few lines, to assure you that your mother and I, and all the family, have sympathized with you in your affliction. We are sorry, especially, to find you have been so low and dejected under your disorder. You should consider, first, that affliction is the lot of humanity, in this fallen and corrupt world. We have sinned; and we must suffer. This we may, and ought to expect, and be accordingly prepared. Secondly, 'whom the Lord loveth he

chasteneth.' As Christians, he chastens, 'every son whom he receiveth.' As Christians, therefore, we ought still to look for chastisement. And if we consider it as a token of Divine love, or as a trial of our grace, and as a purifying furnace, in which we are to be purged more and more from the love of this present world, and from all our corruptions, we may well take it patiently, and thank God for it. There are two errors, or rather sins, into which we are in danger of falling, under affliction; one through a kind of fool-hardiness, making light of it, and the other is, through having little courage, to be cast down. The Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, cautions against both. 'My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.' You are in most danger of the last; and, I beseech you, be on your guard against it. If you live longer, you will have more to suffer; but fear not; make God your friend, and rest assured he will never leave you, nor forsake you. He will be with you in the water and in the fire, and will make all things work for your good."

About this time, Mr. John Benson, having been labouring under depression of mind, received from his pious and affectionate father, a letter, of which the following is an extract.

"December, 1804.

"All of us are distressed to observe that you are so cast down. You should consider that the present is a time of trial with you, and that the people of God must have their times of trial. No one was eminently useful who was not brought through deep waters. Those great and good men, Mr. Wesley and Mr. Whitefield, had times of great trial, before they entered upon, and were blessed in, the work of the ministry. Mr. Whitefield, at Oxford, was brought so low by affliction and distress of mind, that he could hardly creep up stairs to his room, for several weeks. But at the same time, God visited his soul, and showed him his salvation. Do, my dear, endeavour to trust in God, and cast your care upon him, while you strive to the utmost to fulfil your duty as to the pursuit of your studies. And fear not, I hope these exercises of your patience will end well."

The following extract, as Mr. John Benson justly observes, upon the subject of being fully employed, is highly characteristic of his venerated father.

"You are busy, and I am busy. And it is very well. It is more for our happiness, than if we had too much leisure. I am of Dr. Young's mind;

'Leisure is pain; takes off our chariot wheels;
 How heavily we drag the load of life!
 Blest leisure is our curse, like that of Cain;
 It makes us wander; wander earth around
 To fly the tyrant thought.—

'Without employ,
 The soul is on the rack, the rack of rest,
 To souls most adverse; action all their joys.'

"Mr. Wesley said in a letter to a friend in 1771, 'That your every hour is crowded with employment, I account an uncommon blessing; the more employment the better, since you are not doing your own will, but the will of him that sent you.' "

On occasion of his son's entering upon a situation which required much exertion, he received from his father a letter of which the following is an extract.

March, 1808.

"It appears that you will not want work, but we hope God will enable you to go through it with comfort to yourself and profit to the people; which that you may, is our fervent desire and prayer to God. Much, very much, will depend on your losing no time in the morning. If you are not careful in this respect, you will be embarrassed and in confusion every day of your life. And determine to be *punctual*. Do every thing at the *proper* time, the time appointed, and rather be five or ten minutes too soon, than one too late. Fail not also to use exercise in some way or other, out of doors daily. Pray, and live near to God, and he will bless your soul and your labours."

The following extract is taken from a letter in answer to one written by the same son, in which he had observed that, on account of his leaving certain friends, he was rather uncomfortable :—

London, —, 1808.

"As to the want of friends, never mind that. What is called friendship is hardly to be called a part of Christianity. Make the Lord Jesus your friend, and love them that love him in sincerity, and serve them from *love*, as far as in your power, and that is friendship enough. In short, let it be your chief desire and care to be a Christian, and if you even find as few friends as he did who was denied by one disciple, betrayed by another, and forsaken by all, be not surprised, and be not cast down; but commend your cause to him that judgeth righteously, and he will make even this to work for your good."

His son having consulted him on the subject of marriage, in November, 1808, Mr. Benson observed,—

“The chief thing to be considered is, whether God will approve of your union; and concerning this, you ought to pray with great fervency, that you may know his will. If other things be suitable, I have no fear of your wanting what is needful for this life. * * *

“But, as I said in my last, ‘He that believeth (or trusteth in God’s providence and grace) shall not make haste.’ Do nothing rashly, and I pray God to direct you in this and all things.”

After marriage, Mr. Benson wrote,—

“By this time you begin to find what a comfortable thing it is to have one in whom you can confide, and to whom you can communicate your thoughts and cares on all occasions. I trust you will continue agreeable to each other, and be happy together. Be sure you endeavour to assist each other in the best things. Besides reading the Scriptures and prayer, morning and evening, in the family, pray together yourselves. If the Lord bless you, your union will be a source of comfort; otherwise it will not. And attend seriously to the state of your mind towards God; that you have a satisfactory sense of his favour; and also to your work, as a Minister of the everlasting Gospel. Remember, it is the most honourable and important that can possibly engage any human creature. Labour to be a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. Read, meditate, write, and pray, as much as your health will permit, and fail not to visit and pray with the sick, when you have an opportunity so to do.”

Mr. J. Benson mentioning certain inconveniences he experienced in his situation, his father wrote,—

“You will find things disagreeable in every situation. It is in vain to expect it otherwise on earth. This is a state of labour, suffering, and trial; not of enjoyment. O learn to pray, believe, and trust in the Lord, and endeavour to do your duty, and patiently suffer what the Lord is pleased to lay upon you, relying on his never-failing promises, and expecting your reward, though unworthy of any, in a better state.”

Speaking of himself, March, 1817, he writes,—

“As to me, I am a little distressed with a rheumatic pain in my left arm; but, in other respects, am well, only remember, I am growing old, yet I am able to preach twice on the Lord’s day, and generally to walk many miles, frequently *eight* or *ten*. And I am at my work, on the Commentary, Magazines, &c., generally from five in the morning till near ten or eleven at night.—Dr. Clarke, I find, declines meddling with the Apocalypse. Shall I decline it also?”

In the last letter he wrote to Mr. J. Benson, he observes,—

“Remember, the great point is, that we be holy and useful in our generation ; for we are not to live unto ourselves, but to him who died for us, and rose again. Let us always keep eternity in view, and see that we are always ready to enter it.”

These extracts of letters, written for the inspection of a beloved son, to whom they were addressed, equally evince Mr. Benson’s parental affection, and deadness to the world.

The 4th of January, 1818, proved to Mr. Benson, who had well learned to be diligent and earnest in the best of works, a day of considerable exertion. In the forenoon, he preached at Hinde-Street, on “Redeeming the time ;” and in the afternoon, kept a meeting for the renewal of the covenant ; immediately after which, to about six hundred communicants, he administered the Lord’s Supper. It was five o’clock before he had concluded ; and, at half past six, he preached again, “with much liberty and comfort.” He adds, “I bless the Lord, he has inclined and, in some measure, enabled me to give myself up anew to his service, to which it is my desire to dedicate all my powers of body and mind, with all my time and talents of whatever kind. O may he daily teach my ignorance, and help my weakness !”

March 14. Mr. Benson says, “I thank God, I have now completed my Commentary on the Bible, undertaken at the desire of the Conference held in Manchester, A. D. 1809, and begun in November of that year ; so that I have had it in hand a little more than eight years ; during which time, I have generally been employed upon it, and the Magazines and other publications, from five in the morning, winter as well as summer, to eleven at night, allowing time only for meals. Added to this, most Sundays I have read prayers in one or other of our chapels once, and preached twice in London, or its vicinity, and frequently have walked the same day eight, ten, or even twelve miles, and sometimes fourteen or fifteen ; so that, certainly, if the Lord had not, in a peculiar degree, strengthened me, it would have been impossible for my feeble frame to have so long sustained such confinement and such labours. I believe I can say, too, that God has, in a singular manner, directed me, and given me light in his word ; so that, I trust, I have been able, in a satisfactory manner to explain most difficult passages, and to give, in general, the true sense of the Divine Oracles. My labour has been hard, and I have been frequently straitened for time ; but my work has not been unpleasant, but rather delightful ; and while I have been endeavouring to edify others, I have been edified myself. To God be all the glory !”

On the 27th of March, Mr. Benson’s youngest son took coach for —, in order to remain a few months with his brother. “I dismissed him,” says his affectionate father, “with prayers and tears, and earnestly be-

sought the Lord to make his way prosperous." He then adds, "I trust he is truly pious, and has a single eye to the glory of God. May the Lord render him useful!"

In compliance with the earnest entreaties of his friends at Hull, Mr. Benson attended their annual Missionary Meeting on the 15th of April, at which he was called to preside. "I endeavoured," says he, "to show the great importance of missions to the heathen, and to such of our colonies as were destitute of evangelical Ministers, and the great success which had attended the labours of our Missionaries." He then adds, "Many very excellent speeches were delivered by the Preachers and others, from different parts. The chapel was quite crowded, and the meeting continued five hours."

On the evening of April 16, Mr. Benson preached with comfort to a crowded congregation, in that town. His subject was John xviii. 37. Also, in the forenoon of the 19th, he preached at the chapel in George-Yard, a chapel which he had opened in December, 1786. "It was," says he, "crowded with attentive hearers, and I was much assisted in explaining and applying 2 Cor. v. 14, 15." In the evening, he preached in another chapel to a crowded congregation. And again, on the 20th of April, he remarks, "This evening I preached to this dear people once more; and, with peculiar enlargement of mind and freedom of speech, explained 1 Pet. v. 10. It was, indeed, a precious opportunity."

Under date May 28, Mr. Benson notices the death of the Rev. George Story, who in the 80th year of his age, died but a few days before, as he had long lived, in the possession of that happiness which flows immediately from the *ever-blessed* God. He became an itinerant Preacher amongst the Methodists in the year 1762; and was appointed in 1792, editor of the Methodist-Magazine, and other publications, and a few years after, superintendent of the Conference Printing-office. He was a man of good sense, considerable knowledge, and, what is abundantly better, of eminent piety.

On June 28, is recorded, also, the rather sudden death of the Rev. James Needham, a man of very holy character, who had travelled with great acceptance for nineteen years. His illness was no more than three days' continuance. He died on the 27th of June, in the midst of his usefulness; leaving behind him a wife and five children. Surely, "the ways of Providence are dark and intricate;" but we have the happiness to know, that they are all the product of infinite wisdom, in conjunction with infinite love!

The Conference being held this year at Leeds, Mr. Benson arrived there on the 25th of July. On the forenoon of the following day, he preached at WESLEY CHAPEL, to a crowded congregation of Preachers and people. The Preachers, who gladly availed themselves of an

opportunity of hearing him once more, ranged in the front of the gallery, listened to him with pleasure and profit.

The following letter, written by Mr. Benson to Arthur Keene, Esq., of Dublin, on the subject of the contentions that then prevailed amongst the Methodists in Ireland, relative to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper being administered, in certain cases, by their own Preachers, will be read with pleasure and profit by men of peace and love, however differently they may decide upon matters of opinion.

London, June 18, 1818.

"My dear Sir,

"The division which has taken place in the Methodist Society in Dublin, and divers other places in Ireland, has caused me much grief, and I have desired exceedingly that one side would yield to the other in whole, or in part, rather than continue to contend about a matter, certainly not essential to salvation either way, nor of equal importance with peace and brotherly love amongst the sincere disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ. I have been, and still am confident that the side which should yield to the other would manifest most of a true Christian spirit, and what would be much more acceptable to the Lord than obstinately adhering to a pre-determined plan, however just and important it might be thought to be. All divisions among the people of God are pregnant with mischief; and the more important the cause of any division is judged to be, the greater is the mischief which is produced; the greater warmth, strife, animosity, and contention; the more tale-bearing, backbiting, evil-speaking, and slandering; separating chief friends, and turning every man's sword against his brother. Of course it hinders, yea, destroys, the work of God, more effectually than any thing else can do; even that work the grand object of which is to spread peace and good will among men, and to cause all that are influenced by it to love as brethren, yea, to be of one heart and of one soul, and if called to it, even to lay down their lives for each other. Alas! my dear Sir, how far are we, as a body of people, when contending and dividing, from this religion! How far from the true Christian spirit! And what is the cause of this contention? Is it whether believers in Jesus shall have the Lord's Supper administered to them or not? No; but whether they shall receive it in places occupied by ministers of the Established Church, or in the chapels of the Methodists! Certainly, I wished that our Preachers and people, both in Britain and Ireland, had proceeded on as in the early stages of Methodism. This I think would have been best; but then I do not think the introduction of the New Plan is so great an evil as this division is and will be. Nor do I think, on the other hand, that they who are so warm for it, will find by experience that it will prove to them so great a blessing, as the preservation of union would have been. I, therefore, have most

earnestly desired, and I still desire, that the parties would compromise matters in some way or other, that strife and contention, with their attendant evils, may cease, and love and harmony be restored; and why may not this be done on some such ground as our Plan of Pacification?

“But if this cannot be; if the division which has commenced must continue, and, continuing, become more extensive, then, in the name of THE GOD OF PEACE, of THE PRINCE OF PEACE, and of that Holy Spirit, the grand fruit of whose blessed influences are love and peace; let not the sword devour for ever, which would certainly be bitterness in the end; but let the trumpet sound a recal, and let the people on both sides return from pursuing their brethren. And in future let each party go on its way quietly, without molesting the other, or laying stumbling-blocks in the way of any of them; and let all henceforward “follow after the things which make for peace, and the things whereby each may edify another.”

“The Brethren who now come to you by order of Conference, I doubt not, will labour after this, not being party-men, but sincere lovers of all that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Excuse the liberty I take in addressing you in this language. It is dictated by a real concern for the glory of God, and the prosperity of his cause in Ireland, and from much sorrow of heart to see Christ so dreadfully wounded in the house of his friends, as he is by these divisions and contentions. And be assured, that it is with perfect truth that I subscribe myself,

“Your very affectionate friend,

“And obedient servant in Christ,

JOSEPH BENSON.”

This letter would have reflected honour upon a Bishop of the primitive church.

At the City-Road Chapel, on the evening of November 1, Mr. Benson informs us, that from Heb. xii. 16, he spoke very strong things, especially when adverting to the case of the ungodly children of religious parents. That there are so many of that unhappy description, is chiefly owing to their not having been favoured with a sufficient degree of personal religious instruction, nor subjected to proper discipline.

Having, about the 17th of January, 1819, been preparing for the press *Arndt's True Christianity*, Mr. Benson, says, “The grand point which Arndt insists on, and which is undoubtedly according to Scripture, is, that the very essence of Christianity is a conformity to the life of Christ, with which the lives of most professing Christians are utterly at variance, being earthly and carnal, and too generally devilish also.”

After much hesitation, Mr. Benson consented to attend the Conference, which was this year held at Bristol. He arrived at Bath on the 24th of July, where he preached both in the forenoon and evening of the 25th.

On the morning of the following day he set out for Bristol, where he says, "I was very agreeably accommodated at Mr. Hall's, and happy in the company of all the four Preachers they entertained besides myself."

At Mrs. Wait's, on the 29th, Mr. Benson had the pleasure of meeting his old friend, Miss Jones, with whom he was intimately acquainted while Master of Kingswood-School, viz. from 1766 to 1770. "It was," says he, "pleasing and refreshing to call to remembrance the events of those times, and the persons we then knew, and to find that we were still in the good way, on which we had then entered."

According to appointment, Mr. Benson preached on the forenoon of August 1, in a large and commodious chapel which had been erected about three years before that time. "Most of the Preachers," he observes, "were present, and a very large congregation, and the Lord greatly assisted me in explaining and applying 2 Cor. ii. 14—16."

"In the forenoon of August 8," he says, "I heard Mr. Entwisle with satisfaction in King's-Street Chapel; in the evening at six, I preached there to a very crowded congregation of Preachers and people, from Col. i. 27, 28."

The Conference having been concluded on the evening of August 11, Mr. Benson set out from Bristol on the 12th, and, after an agreeable journey, arrived in London about noon the following day.

In perusing Mr. Benson's papers, we have frequently observed, with pleasure, the kindness of heart which he manifested, time after time, by speaking in strong terms of approbation, without any qualifying epithets, of several sermons, which he heard delivered by his brethren in the ministry. Under date August 15, he says, "Some Preachers being in town, I got my place at Hinde-Street supplied to-day; and, in the morning, heard Mr. V. Ward, at City-Road Chapel, on Acts xiii. 38, 39; and Mr. Stewart, from Ireland, in the evening, on Rom. v. 11. Both sermons were, indeed, very excellent, and gave me great satisfaction."

On the 3d of October, Mr. Benson, though weak and otherwise indisposed, ventured to walk to Deptford. The moment he arrived there, after a walk of two hours, he went into the pulpit, where he remained on his feet two hours more. "The Lord," says he, "strengthened me, and I was enabled to preach with comfort. I then returned by coach."

We find, under date October 21, the following paragraph; "Having been greatly weakened by a distressing complaint, three weeks ago, which continued near a fortnight, and the weather setting in very cold and stormy, I have found myself very chilly, and unable to bear it as I used to do, being now almost seventy-two years of age. May I remember, and prepare for my departure out of time into eternity."

Mr. Benson observes, that through the whole of the week which preceded October 31, his sickness and want of appetite continued, with a

considerable degree of fever. But making a right use of the painful dispensation, he was enabled, under the above date, to say, "I have found it very profitable to-day to review my whole past life, and humble myself before God, for my numerous failings, both as a Christian and a Minister of Christ. I hope, however, my eye has been single, and my heart upright before God, during all the years I have been employed in his work; and, indeed, from the time of my conversion, in 1765."

Mr. Benson continuing so weak as to be unable to preach on the 14th of November, when his appointment was at the City-Road, and when a collection was to be made, in aid of the Sunday Schools, comforted himself with the consideration, that Mr. Watson took his place in the morning, and Mr. Bunting in the evening. "Doubtless," says he, "through this change, a much greater collection has been obtained than I should have gotten, who have frequently preached at this and our other chapels these nineteen years."

"Still unable to preach, Mr. Benson, under date November 21, says, "I am, indeed, thankful to God, that, though I have not been able to preach, I have not been prevented from filling my office, as Editor of the Magazine and our other publications."

In the morning of December 5, he walked to Lambeth; and another person having read prayers, he preached from Rom. xv. 4. The Stewards having insisted upon his taking a coach, he returned home, after dinner, by that conveyance.

December 19, Mr. Benson thus expresses himself:—"My chief concern is, and I trust will be to my dying day, to live to God myself, and to induce as many others as possible to live to him. - Lord, teach my ignorance, and help my weakness, and give thy blessing to my endeavours to show forth thy praise, and glorify thee *in* and *with* my body and spirit, which are thine; *in* my body, by temperance, chastity, purity; and *with* my body, by employing all its members, and every degree of health and strength which thou givest, to thy glory; *in* my spirit, by humility, resignation, patience, contentment, meekness, gentleness, and long-suffering, benevolence, faith, hope, love, and every grace; and *with* my spirit, by using my understanding, judgment, memory, conscience, will, affections, and all my faculties, to thy honour and praise."

Not being able to preach on the 25th of December, he says, "It is, I believe, the first and *only* Christmas-Day these fifty years in which I have not preached, at least once; but, indeed, I have generally preached twice on this blessed day, and not seldom three times. Thanks be to the Lord, for giving me health and strength so long! and may he enable me, with patience and resignation, to bear this trying dispensation of his providence! and may he sanctify it to me!"

Unwilling, if possible, to spend any more silent sabbaths, Mr. Benson preached at Queen-Street Chapel in the forenoon of December 26. He

was peculiarly assisted upon the occasion. "I dined," he remarks, "and spent a comfortable hour with Mr. and Mrs. Butterworth, and then walked home; but I was much fatigued before I got to City-Road."

The effects of the coldness of the air, joined to his exertions through the day, were, that he coughed almost without intermission throughout the night, and was unable to sleep a single moment. Most of the three following nights, he slept *very* little, and the consequence was, that, from the mysterious union which subsists between the human soul and body, his mind was considerably depressed. "However," he says, "I have been enabled to say from the heart to my merciful Preserver, who careth for me and all his children, '*Father*, thy will be done!'"

On the 31st of December, he observes, "The Lord has mercifully preserved me to see the last day of the year, though in a state of greater affliction, and longer continued, than I ever before experienced. I have employed much of the day in examining myself respecting the present state of my soul, and my whole past life, and my prospects with respect to eternity. I have seen many things in my spirit and conduct, from my youth, for which I have great reason to be abased before God; and, on account of which, I am ashamed and humbled; and yet I thank God, I have, I hope, had my conversation in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity; aiming to glorify God, and serve my generation, according to his will. I have not pursued, in whole or in part, the riches, honours, pleasures of the world, or a life of ease; but have laboured to be useful, relying on the Lord for his blessing, which, blessed be his name, he has not withheld, but rendered, I trust, my preaching and writing a mean of spiritual good to many. Nevertheless, so much imperfection has accompanied all my endeavours to do good, that I have great reason to say to the Lord, 'Not unto me, but unto thy name, be the praise;' and 'It is of thy mercy that I am not consumed.' I have also looked back on the mercies of the year, and have seen great reason to acknowledge, with respect both to myself and all my children, and children's children, the superintending care and guidance of a gracious Providence, which has watched over me and mine, and, in answer to prayer, has, time after time, interposed for my direction in difficulties, succour in temptations, and support in trials and troubles. My heart has been impressed with sentiments of gratitude, and I have endeavoured to devote myself to God afresh, to live, if spared on earth, more than ever to his glory. My soul has been drawn out to him in prayer, for grace to enable me so to do."

On the first of January, 1820, Mr. Benson, after mentioning that he was unable to attend the watch-night, at either City-Road, the preceding evening, or any other chapel, adds, "However, I bless the Lord, that I have been enabled to devote myself, soul and body, afresh to his service,

and have enjoyed liberty of access to him. I have also found my heart drawn out much in prayer, for all my family."

Mr. Benson, still continuing unable to preach, says, under date January 30, "I have spent most of the day in reading, meditation, and prayer. O may I have daily proof of my growth in grace!"

On the forenoon of February 13, being, in some degree, restored to health, he preached at City-Road Chapel, when he "was favoured with strength, both of body and mind, and much liberty of speech." His subject was Rom. xv. 4. "I chose this text," says he, "partly with a view to establish the congregation in their faith in the certain truth and infinite importance of the Scriptures, in opposition to the infidel principles which have been so sedulously propagated of late in town and country."

As public worship was appointed to be held in most churches, and chapels, in the metropolis and its environs, on the 16th of February, being the day on which his late Majesty was interred, Mr. Benson, at the desire of his brethren, consented to preach on the occasion, in City-Road Chapel. His subject was Ps. xviii. 46: "The Lord liveth, and blessed be my rock, and let the God of my salvation be exalted." "I hope," he remarks, "that what was advanced will be a means of encouragement to some, ready to despond and fear, under our great national loss. I related several anecdotes respecting our deceased Monarch."

We find that Mr. Benson was so far recovered as to be able to preach at Southwark, on the 27th of February, and, on the 5th of March, at Hinde-Street. He walked to both those places.

On the 26th of March, he walked to Chelsea, where he preached, both in the forenoon and in the afternoon. "I was," says he, "much assisted both times; and, I trust, the word was attended with a peculiar blessing."

From this period, Mr. Benson seems to have been able, for a considerable time after, to attend to his regular appointments.

At the Conference, which was held this year in Liverpool, Mr. Bunting was chosen President, and Mr. George Marsden, Secretary. The Preachers earnestly desiring to see Mr. Benson once more amongst them, ordered their Secretary to write him an official invitation. In conformity with this, Mr. Marsden, on July 26, wrote the following letter:—

"My dear Brother,

"At the request of the Conference, I write to express the very earnest desire of the Preachers that you would, if possible, favour them with your company, for, at least, a few days, at the Conference; and that your doing so would be particularly pleasing to them. I am, dear Brother,

"Yours very affectionately,

"GEORGE MARSDEN."

With this communication, Mr. Bunting, the President, forwarded the following note :—

“ Dear Sir,

“ I have the greatest pleasure in forwarding you officially the request of the Conference, that, if it is at all convenient and comfortable to you, you will favour us with your presence. I believe you would be a blessing to us. At all events, pray for us, and believe me to be,

“ My dear Sir,

“ Most affectionately yours,

“ JABEZ BUNTING.”

From Mr. Benson's reply to this respectful and affectionate invitation, our limits prohibit our inserting more than a few extracts. His letter bears date July 29.

Addressing the President and Secretary he says :

“ My dear Brethren,

“ I congratulate you on your elevation to two of the highest, although, perhaps, the most laborious of the offices that have a name in our body, not questioning but you will fill them to the entire satisfaction of the Brethren, and the benefit of the Connexion.

“ In answer to the very kind message, transmitted to me by you in very friendly terms, I must request you to inform the Conference, that I indeed consider myself as being very much obliged to them for this fresh token of their love in requesting my presence, at least for a few days during their sittings ; a request with which I would cheerfully comply, were it not for the following reasons.

“ 1. I am not in so confirmed a state of health as to justify my taking so long a journey as that from London to Liverpool would be. 2. I am particularly wanted at the Printing-Office, several times every day, and, indeed, almost every hour, and must be so unless several of our Compositors and Pressmen were turned off, which would be a serious injury to them, as they would not, at present, find it possible to get work elsewhere. 3. I am much wanted in the way of preaching and meeting the Societies, to assist the two Brethren, who, of all the nine appointed for the two London Circuits, only remain in town.”

Mr. Benson proceeds to inform the Conference of how he had been recently engaged in preaching, &c., and adds, “ A sense of duty, therefore, and that alone, induces me to decline complying with the desire of the Conference ; and from the very tender and affectionate manner, in which their desire is expressed, I infer they will not be grieved at my conduct.” “ That the Lord may direct and bless all the consultations,

appointments, and acts of the Conference, is the sincere and earnest prayer of

Your affectionate brother, in Christ,

“JOSEPH BENSON.”

This is the last communication which the Methodist Conference ever received from this pious, learned, zealous, laborious, and eminently successful Minister of Christ. When he wrote it, and for some time previously to his doing so, it might have been emphatically said of him, “The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

On the 30th of July, in the forenoon, he preached at Hinde-Street Chapel, and in the evening at City-Road. In the latter place his subject was, Rom. viii. 8, 9. “I bless the Lord,” he observes, “that he strengthened me both in body and mind, and enabled me to bear a clear, and, I believe, a true and scriptural testimony to the very important doctrine contained in the text.”

Mr. Benson, on the 13th of August, preached twice at Queen-Street Chapel, to large congregations. “The Lord,” says he, “strengthened me both in body and mind, and enabled me so to speak that I believe the whole congregation heard well.”

Under the above date, he notices, that in the preceding year, there had been in the United States of America, an increase to the Methodist Societies of sixteen thousand members; that the whole numbers of the Methodists on that Continent amounted to two hundred and fifty thousand; and that they had nine hundred *Travelling* and three thousand *Local* Preachers! He adds, “An amazing work indeed, wrought in fifty-one years, since Mr. Boardman and Mr. Pilmoor were sent over to that country by Mr. Wesley!”

After having preached twice at the City-Road, on September 10, Mr. Benson says, on the following day; “I have felt the effects of yesterday’s extraordinary exertions, having slept little or none last night, and being in various respects unwell.”

Notwithstanding he was affected with a bad cough, and otherwise indisposed, he read prayers and preached at Gainsford-Street in the forenoon of September 24, and preached at Southwark in the evening to a very large congregation.

On the 1st of October he was unable to attend his appointment at Chelsea; but on the 8th, he preached twice at Westminster. “I was,” says he, “much assisted both times, and the congregation was much larger than I had seen it before, unless on the day of opening the chapel.”

On his way to Hinde-Street, where he was to preach in the forenoon of October 29, Mr. Benson was seized in Oxford-Street with such a weakness in his legs, that, in order to prevent his falling, he was obliged

to take hold of the rails before the houses. But notwithstanding his great weakness, he, leaning on the arm of a friend, proceeded to the chapel; and having rested in the vestry till after the prayers were read, he found his strength so recruited that he was able to preach, "with liberty and comfort." His subject was Rom. x. 4. This was the last sermon he ever preached at Hinde-Street.

Though much troubled with a cough, and otherwise afflicted, he walked to Gainsford-Street on the morning of November 5, and preached there for the last time. On neither of the two following Sundays was he able to preach; but on Sunday the 26th of November, he ventured to walk to Walworth, where, he says, he "was able to preach without difficulty, yea, with comfort and enlargement, from Phil. i. 9—11; 'And this I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere, and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God.'"

With this sermon, which he was so much assisted in delivering, Mr. Benson concluded his public ministry;—a ministry of more than fifty years' continuance, and one that had been abundantly blessed to the benefit of tens of thousands. From this time he discontinued his Journal.

We acknowledge our obligation to the Rev. Joseph Entwisle for a copy of the following letter addressed to him, by Mr. Benson, on January 18, 1820.

"My very dear Brother,

"Your very affectionate letter of the 6th instant came duly to hand, although partly through indisposition of body, and partly through my daily engagements in the duties of my office, I have been prevented hitherto from acknowledging the receipt of it, and returning you due thanks for it. I am indeed, extremely obliged to you, your fellow-labourers, and the friends of Sheffield, who have kindly sympathized with me in my affliction, and prayed, I believe, fervently for my restoration to health. And your and their prayers, with those of many others, have been so far answered, that, I thank God, I have been greatly relieved, and enabled to go on regularly with my work in my study as Editor; but I am far from being perfectly restored, having, for several weeks been very much distressed with a very afflictive cough, which has caused me to have sleepless nights, and has prevented my gaining strength; and this, through the bitter frost, and extreme coldness of the air, is still continued; so that I am entirely confined to the house. I hope, however, if it should please God to give us a little milder weather, so that I could go out and take the benefit of the air, I shall gradually get quit of my cough, and obtain proper rest in sleep by night, which would greatly

relieve me. In the mean time, I thank God, I am enabled to acquiesce entirely in his will ; not questioning but his hand is in the affliction, and that he will make it work for my good.

“In preparing some volumes of the Christian Library for the press, and in meditation and prayer in my study, I have many precious seasons, and do not at all regret this divine visitation. I trust it is, and will be the means of rendering me more holy in heart and life, and better prepared for that great change which awaits me, and which considering my age, can be at no great distance.

“I am,

“Your affectionate Brother,

JOSEPH BENSON.”

Mr. Benson's health began to decline two years before his death, owing to the decay of a naturally strong constitution, and in consequence of some internal complaints. After great exertions, he was subject to faintings, and was more or less affected with a cough, accompanied by fever ; and latterly, in his hands and feet dropsical symptoms appeared. But his infirmities did not prevent his usual labours as a preacher, till within about ten weeks of his decease ; and he continued to perform his full work as *Editor*, till within three weeks previous to that event taking place ; when only a part of it was relinquished.

For a considerable time, it had appeared to his family and friends, that he excelled in the practice of those graces by which he had so long adorned his Christian profession, and that he was evidently drinking deeper than ever into the spirit of holiness.

Having, as has been mentioned, preached his last sermon on the 26th of November, at Walworth, he, on the day following, was very much afflicted ; and from that time his strength so failed, that he was frequently overpowered by drowsiness, and unable, for any considerable time, to stand or walk without falling down.

It appears, that during his last illness, he occasionally said, “I shall not be long here ;” and that having said this, he added “How many have I known that are gone into eternity ; many more than I know upon earth !” Though sensible of great weakness, and frequently suffering much pain, his mind was constantly serene, and his spirit patient and submissive. Steadfast in his religious principles, and knowing well the solidity of the foundation on which his hope was built, he never expressed a *fear*, or even a *doubt*, respecting his eternal happiness. In his family devotions he often prayed with much fervour, to the God of all grace, that he might have fortitude and resignation sufficient to bear his increasing afflictions, and that he might be enabled to use to good purpose the remaining time and talents allotted him ; expressing, at the same time, his gratitude for the possession of his reasoning powers, and for

the degree of bodily strength afforded him. No longer able to preach, he endeavoured to be useful by his pen, even when, through extreme debility, and the heavy languor with which he was oppressed, it frequently fell from his hand.

Generally, during his illness, when asking a blessing or returning thanks at meals, he formed a prayer, in which he included all his relations, friends, and the Church of Christ, particularly his afflicted people. Nor did he, on those occasions, forget to pray that his family might have the sanctified use of the various afflictions under which they then laboured. But the length of these religious exercises, he did not make a substitute for family prayer. In the morning, except once, he always prayed himself; in the evening that duty devolved on another branch of the family.

Having visited one of his daughters, who was very ill in bed, on the 15th of November, he said, "My love, I have been praying for you this morning; while in prayer I was low and dejected, but in walking here I have been particularly comforted." He then spoke of her many afflictions, and of the many deliverances which God had vouchsafed to her; bringing her to the borders of the grave, and then raising her up again. About a week after, he paid her another visit; when he was so exhausted by the walk as to be scarcely able to speak. Having recovered a little strength, he said, "My dear, you are much in the way that your mother was; I have been thinking much this morning of her restoration." And after enlarging upon the subject, he said, "I have no doubt the Lord will restore you." He dwelt much upon being willing to *suffer*, as well as to *do* the will of God.

One Lord's-day evening, near Christmas, he entered into a conversation with her, on the subject of Christ's power to remove her complaint; a subject which she herself had introduced. He continued to converse with her for more than two hours; a most unusual length of time for him to converse in his own family.

Supposing her to be near death, he paid her another visit on the 28th of December. Their conversation was affecting and profitable; turning upon the subject of total resignation, and that of Christians carrying their necessities before God in believing prayer. He spoke of the miracles of Christ, and encouraged her to believe in his power to restore her. He dwelt particularly on the resurrection of Lazarus, and on our Lord's words to Martha:—"Said I not unto thee that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God." He afterwards said to her, "Well, love, I do not know which of us will go first; I think that I shall." "O no! father," she replied, "I think I shall die first." He appeared to check himself, and said, "I have been much comforted in prayer respecting you, and have no doubt that God will comfort you after your time of trial;" and added, that she must *act* faith upon the promises of God.

Tuesday, January 9, 1821. In conversation with Dr. Hamilton, speaking on the excellency of St. Paul's character, he said, "I never reflect upon his faith,—his zeal,—his patience,—his self-denial,—his labours and sufferings, but I think I have scarcely begun to be a Christian."

On January 11, at the earnest desire of Mr. Allan, he was taken in a coach to consult Dr. Baillie, of Cavendish-Square, respecting his health, accompanied by his eldest son, who was his medical attendant. Dr. B. was of opinion that his complaint arose from a general disruption of his natural constitution, hastened by too close application to study, and too abstemious habits. He prescribed for him some tonic medicines, which were tried for about a fortnight, without any apparent good effect.

On Saturday morning, January 13, he mentioned to Mr. Bunting the necessity of his soon resigning the office of Editor, and requested him immediately to undertake the publication of the remaining part of "The Christian Library;" this Mr. Bunting engaged to do for him, until the ensuing Conference should appoint his successor in the editorial department.

On Monday, January 15, Mr. Atmore, who called to see him in the morning, was much affected by finding him much depressed in both body and mind. That night, retiring to bed in an extremely weak and feeble state, having taken some laudanum, he appeared to have slept well till very early in the morning, when he was seized with a fainting fit, which suspended the use of his animal functions. As soon as he became sensible, he with difficulty called for help, having before struggled, without effect, to help himself. He recovered, however, so far as to sit up to breakfast, one of the family having dressed him that morning for the first time.

Under date January 23, one of his children, in a letter, observes, "He has for some time had a great deal of fever, and great dryness and parchedness in his mouth and throat; his legs swell very much, and he is so weak as scarcely to be able to walk, even with the help of my arm. I am obliged to help him to dress and undress, and can scarcely ever leave him alone, lest he should fall."

On Friday, January 26, several friends visited him; with whom he conversed on the trials of God's people in this world, and how they ought to be sanctified.

On Saturday, January 27, Mr. and Mrs. Marsden visited him. "At first," says Mr. Marsden, "he appeared low, but gradually revived. He said, that the only foundation on which he could rest was, 'By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.' He added, that he had been accustomed to examine himself daily, as to his motives, conduct, and the employment of his time; and he could say, that he endeavoured to do the will of God; and that he had never sought money, or honour, or power.' Speaking of his weakness, he re-

marked, that it required great grace to be willing to be laid aside as a broken pitcher."

Mrs. Marsden mentioned that nearly thirty years before this period, she had received her first lasting religious impressions under his ministry. He replied, "The former things are passed away." After a little more conversation, he requested Mr. Marsden to pray with him; after which, they parted from each other in the true spirit of Christian friendship.

Sunday, January 28, he made as great an effort as his weakness would allow, to converse with his warm-hearted friends, Mr. and Mrs. Bulmer; and spoke very feelingly of the rapidity with which his strength had declined. "A little while ago," he remarked, "I could walk to Greenwich and back,—to Deptford and back,—to Hinde-Street,—to Chelsea and back, and preach, and feel as little fatigue on my return, as when I left home; now, I can scarcely cross the room, or walk down stairs without assistance! The change is sudden, but perhaps I boasted too much of my strength." It being observed to him that when he enjoyed strength he had used it to good purpose, he said, "It was indeed a ground of great satisfaction to him, that he had uniformly endeavoured to promote the glory of God and the good of souls; and that though it was not the ground of his confidence, 'for,' said he, 'by grace we are saved;' yet he felt comfort from the consciousness, that from the commencement of his ministry, though sensible of much infirmity and imperfection, he had never been influenced by any sinister or private motive; had it been otherwise, he should have felt very uneasy now."

Upon this occasion he conversed for a little time on the state of the Church, and expressed a pastoral solicitude for the prosperity of the work of God in the Methodist Connexion.

On Monday, January 29, Mrs. Howden visited him. She observes, that he spoke without interruption for half an hour, on the best means of retaining justifying faith, and of growing in grace. Those means, he said, were constant self-denial,—taking up the daily cross,—persevering prayer,—and entire resignation to the Divine will, exemplified by patience in suffering.

Upon another occasion, Mrs. Howden asked him if the doctrines he had embraced in his youth still met with his approbation? He replied, that he saw no cause to reject or change any leading doctrine; and added, that he considered *sanctification* a progressive work,—a constant renewing of the Holy Spirit.

At another time, Mrs. Howden having spoken to him of the privilege which she, in common with thousands, had enjoyed of sitting under his heart-searching ministry; he replied, that it was to him now no more than if he had never preached one sermon. Mrs. Howden judiciously replied, that though it might be nothing in his eyes, yet that those who had been so much edified by his ministry, could not but be grateful to

him as an instrument used by the God of all grace, to promote their spiritual interests ; and that though they could never claim any blessing on the ground of their own merit, yet God himself had said that they should be rewarded according to their works. To all this he briefly replied, " God will judge righteous judgment."

On Wednesday, January 31, his eldest daughter mentioned, that he had been an instrument in the hands of God of bringing multitudes to a saving acquaintance with Christ. But so far was he from attributing to himself the least degree of glory on account of all which God had effected by his instrumentality, that he replied, " It is not *I* ; we must take care that we do not attribute any thing to ourselves ;" and he then added, " It is of the Lord's mercies that I am not consumed." When at dinner, two of his daughters conversed on the subject of self-denial, with respect to delicacies in food, and spoke of renewing the practice of fasting. He said, " It is right to mortify the appetite, but the particular manner of doing so ought to be left to private consciences." He added, " This was not the self-denial meant by our Lord ; the self-denial he inculcated, is the denial of our *own will*."

February 1st. Miss Wesley, who called upon him, says, respecting her visit, " It was very short, as I saw his weakness and inclination to sleep. But he was perfectly *himself*, and looked composed and tranquil. He said, it was a great satisfaction to him now, that he had glorified God in his *youth*, that he often thought of my dear father's last lines, written a short time before his departure, and he began to repeat them ;

' In age and feebleness extreme,
Who shall a helpless worm redeem?'

He then paused, as recollecting, and I added the remainder ;

' Jesus ! my utmost hope thou art,
Strength of my failing flesh and heart !
O could I catch one smile from thee,
And drop into eternity !'

" He said he was weak, and I thought my visit might fatigue him, as he seemed overpowered with sleep ; and after our having affectionately shook hands, I deemed it best to go. He appeared to take my visit very kindly, and I much regretted that the distance prevented my often enjoying the privilege of being with this dear Apostolic Preacher, who ever evinced real friendship towards us. I reminded him of my father's attachment to him ; of which he seemed to have a lively recollection."

On the morning of February 5, it being a very fine day, after having transacted some business with Mr. Cordeux, who generally came after breakfast to consult him respecting articles for the Magazines, and for

which he yet provided copy; one of his daughters proposed a walk to him, which he accomplished with much difficulty. This was the last time he ever left his house.

Some friends called upon him in the afternoon. They were struck with his pallid countenance, feeble frame, and tottering limbs. In the course of conversation, the query was proposed, whether a deviation from unreserved obedience would produce something like regret even in heaven? With great solemnity, Mr. Benson said, "God accepts us not *for* our obedience, but *for* the sacrificial atonement of his Son: 'There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.' He will say, 'I do not condemn thee.' " Thus in his last conversation with those friends, he directed their attention from curious speculations, to revealed truth.

Attempting to rise between three and four o'clock in the morning of Wednesday, February 7, he fell, and so cut his head, that the wound bled much. From about this time he became visibly weaker every day; and of this he was so sensible, that he said shortly after, he would never again attempt to rise without assistance; and that he would permit some one to sleep near him.

On Thursday, February 8, Mr. Haslope asked him how he felt? His reply was, "I thank God, I feel no pain either in body or mind." He seemed anxious to say more, but such was his weakness that he could not proceed.

Friday, February 9. He was much worse, so as to make it impossible that he should be got down stairs again; on this day he said, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in the time of trouble." We may assure ourselves that God does all things well; I am daily and hourly conscious of my own weakness. It is our duty to acquiesce in the will of God, by patience and resignation. We are called not only to do but to suffer the will of God."

In the afternoon, his son Joseph was so powerfully struck with the change which appeared to have commenced, that he could not longer doubt his end was near; he thought he might not live twenty-four hours; his pulse intermitted, and a death-like hue sat upon his countenance. He directed that an account of his father's extreme illness, should be immediately forwarded to his brothers, John and Samuel.

"In the afternoon," says Mr. Atmore, "he had considerable fever upon him, and his legs were greatly swelled. He was quite recollected. I said, 'Sir, we are poor creatures when God lays his hands upon us.' He replied, 'Yes,' with great emphasis; 'when he toucheth us, he maketh us to consume away, like as a moth fretteth a garment.' I afterwards said, 'I have a letter of yours written fifty-five years ago, which I was reading the other day. What a mercy that you have been enabled to be faithful from that time to the present!' He replied, 'As to my being faithful, I leave that to God; he will be my judge. He

knows I have aimed at being faithful, and have served him in the simplicity of my heart.' I then said, 'Your only ground of consolation now is, not what you have done for God, but what he has done for you.' He answered, 'I am saved by grace alone, through faith.' I replied, 'There is no other foundation than that which God hath laid in Zion.' He answered, 'No; there needs no other; that is quite sufficient.' "

During the forenoon of Sunday, February 11, he was almost wholly silent. On Monday morning, February 12, he was removed, but with great difficulty, at his own request, from his bed-room into his study on the same floor. As usual, he chose to wash himself; but so much he could not effect without painful and tedious exertion. To his second daughter, unable to see him through her own illness, he sent this message; "That she receive with patience and resignation to the Divine will, the present dispensation of God to us, (referring to himself and her,) saying, 'Good is the will of the Lord.' " Having been unable for some time to pray with his family in the evening, that duty devolved on another member of it; but at the earnest entreaty of his children present, who thought it might be the last time they should hear him, this evening he added, "Answer the petitions which have now been offered up.—May we confide in thy wisdom, and experience the influence of thy Spirit! may our hope be in thee! Prepare us for whatever thou hast prepared for us." These proved to be the last words of prayer which he audibly expressed.

During the whole of Tuesday, February 13, he kept his bed, being more than usually oppressed in respiration, and, through weakness, unable to expectorate. His fever increased, accompanied by a profuse perspiration.

In the evening, his son Joseph supposed it not improbable that he might expire in the course of the night, and hence, during the principal part of it, his family watched with him. They anxiously requested him, if possible, to express his present views, with respect to the faith he had maintained through life. John asked, "Do you now feel the virtue of that atonement which removes the sting of death? and can you say, 'I thank God through our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath given us the victory?'" He answered, "You know, John, these are truths which I have said, and testified for many years." "Then Father," he rejoined, "you know in whom you have believed, and are assured that he will keep what you have committed to him against that day." He replied, "Yes." His eldest daughter said, "Do you not wish us to follow you as you have followed Christ?" "Certainly," said he. After this interview, some of the family retired to rest; but were called up about three o'clock, when, on account of his breathing more short and with greater difficulty, a speedy change was expected. On taking some sago and wine, however, he revived a little.

On Wednesday, February 14, his pulse was more slow and equal. In the morning Dr. Clarke, Mr. Bunting, and Mr. Richard Smith, visited him. Dr. Clarke was much affected at seeing him. The Doctor said, "You know me, Sir;" he answered, "O yes,—it is Dr. Clarke."—"Well, Sir, you are not far from the kingdom of our God." He replied, "I am not only not far from the kingdom of our God, but *I am sure of finding God in that kingdom*;—I am breaking very fast, and shall do so more and more." Dr. C. said, "You have an all-sufficient and almighty Saviour; and you now maintain your trust in him." He replied, "Yes." The Doctor then prayed with him; after which he said, "You feel the power of those great truths you have for so many years so fully declared to us: we have not followed a cunningly devised fable." He answered, "No, no; I have no hope of being saved but by grace through faith. I still feel the need of the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit." To Mr. Bunting he said, "I am very weak, I feel my infirmities; I feel that I have no sufficiency for any thing good *in myself*." He observed, also, "I consider that we must not only be pardoned and accepted through Christ, but also for his sake, and by his spirit be fully renewed, and made partakers of the Divine nature." Mr. Bunting replied, "You now realize the truths which you have so frequently pressed upon us." He answered, "Yes! O yes!"

On Thursday, February 15, his weakness increased much. That morning, Mr. Marsden, after praying with him, said, "The Lord has long been your refuge, and he will be with you and bless you;" he replied, "I trust he has, and he will:" and on the remark being made, that he should soon be with his God, to behold his glory, and to be a partaker of it, he said, "I trust I shall."

This night he was more wakeful than usual; but too weak to express himself upon any subject. His mind seemed to be occupied with Divine things. Towards the morning, when asked how he felt himself, he said, "I think I am as I have been all the week." After taking some tea, he was seized with a general tremor, which was succeeded by very difficult respiration, with a noise in his throat. This continued with little abatement, till near his death. His eyes, before so clear, and capable of bearing a strong light, now became dim, his mouth dry, and his countenance more pallid. When his mouth was moistened with some liquid, his breathing was almost suspended. About seven o'clock in the evening, he began to breathe more gently, and with equal time; he was evidently near his end. His children stood in awful silence, expecting the event, praying that God would deliver him from the shackles of mortality.—Having kneeled down, they continued in silent prayer for some minutes; after which they commended his departing spirit into the hands of its faithful Creator. A little after, his breathing ceased for some minutes,

but again returned with a gentle, and gradually decreasing tone, till at length he imperceptibly expired.

Thus died JOSEPH BENSON, the mention of whose name will long fill the eye of affection, and to whose memory, posterity will do justice. But the best of all, with respect to him, is, that, having turned many to righteousness, he will shine amongst stars of the first magnitude for ever and ever.

His mortal remains were interred in the ground adjoining to the City-Road Chapel, London, on Thursday February 22. The Trustees of that chapel had kindly expressed a wish that they should be deposited in the same tomb with those of Mr. Wesley, as a token of their high respect for the character of this distinguished Preacher and defender of the doctrines so blessedly revived and propagated in our country by the great Founder of Methodism; but his relatives very naturally preferred his own family-grave. About twelve o'clock the corpse was brought into the chapel, and placed before the pulpit; preceded by Mr. Vasey; by Mr. Bunting and Mr. Marsden, as President and Secretary of the Conference for the time being, and by Dr. A. Clarke and Dr. Hamilton; and followed by the relatives of the deceased, by *twenty-four Travelling Preachers*, by about *twenty Gentlemen*, Mr. Benson's personal friends; and by *thirty Local Preachers*, *twenty Stewards* and *forty* other members of the Society, who appeared in mourning cloaks as representatives of the bodies to which they respectively belonged in the two London Circuits, and thus united to testify their esteem towards their former pastor and faithful minister. Mr. Bunting, as the President, was desired to conduct the usual service both in the chapel and at the grave. Dr. Clarke delivered an address to the immense concourse of people assembled on the occasion; in the course of which he gave a most honourable testimony to the deceased, as a sound scholar, a powerful and able preacher, and a profound theologian; and Mr. Marsden engaged in prayer. Mr. Bunting, as then filling the office of President of the Conference, preached Mr. Benson's funeral sermon in the City-Road Chapel, at eleven o'clock in the forenoon of Friday, March 2; a day memorable to the Methodists, as the Anniversary of Mr. Wesley's death, which occurred on March 2, 1791, thirty years before. His text was 1 Cor. xv. 29. The event was improved also in most of the other chapels, in and near London, and in most places in the country, on Sunday evening, March 4. The pulpits of the chapels were generally covered with black cloth; and most of the congregations testified their respect to Mr. Benson's memory, by appearing in mourning.

On his coffin, on a large brass plate, is the following inscription:—

JOSEPHUS BENSON,

JESU CHRISTI ECCLESIASTES;

OB. 16 FEBRUARI A. D. 1821.

ANNO ÆTATIS 74.

SKETCH OF MR. BENSON'S CHARACTER.



To every pious and intelligent reader it will appear, from a perusal of the preceding narrative, that through every part of his ministerial career, Mr. Benson was both a burning and a shining light. Possessed of a mind formed upon a superior scale, he was eager, almost from infancy, in pursuit of knowledge; hence his extraordinary mental endowments.

At an early period of life, he obtained a saving and experimental acquaintance with God; nor does it appear that he ever, by any part of his subsequent conduct, brought the slightest stain upon his religious character. We do not mean that his obedience to the Divine law was such as he could be justified by; but that, in simplicity and godly sincerity, he had his conduct in the world, and, consequently, that he adorned his Christian profession. He saw and felt that he could not possibly be otherwise saved than "by grace through faith." His views of the Law and the Gospel were clear and distinct; nor did he ever, either from the pulpit or the press, confound the one with the other.

At a period when the Methodists were comparatively few in number, and when reproach, together with a degree of other persecution, was pretty generally their lot, he became a member of their Society. His father, who designed him to fill the office of a minister of the Established Church, was so highly offended in consequence of his connection with the Methodists, that he manifested his displeasure by disposing of his estate at Melmerby.

That Mr. Benson was more abundant in labours than the generality of faithful ministers, none acquainted with his history will be disposed to controvert. Nor did he labour in vain. It appears, in the course of his Memoirs, that such a divine and powerful influence often accompanied his discourses as to render them effectual for the purpose of awakening many sinners to a sense of their guilt and danger, and of abundantly comforting those who, through grace, had believed. Numbers, still in the land of the living, recollect, with pleasure and profit, several of those remarkably blessed times and seasons.

His attachment to the Church of England, of which he always, and with justice, considered himself a member, was strong and unalterable. But he abhorred a party-spirit, and hence embraced in the arms of Christian friendship all, however divided in *opinion*, who loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. His partiality to the Established Church was not accompanied by the slightest disaffection to orthodox and pious Dissenters. As one proof of this, out of many that might be adduced, we

would instance his affectionate recollection of the Rev. Samuel Lowell, of Bristol, an Independent Minister, who ranked amongst his earliest friends at Leeds. When, in the year 1818, Mr. Benson occupied the chair at a meeting of the Bristol Methodist Missionary Society, casting his eye upon Mr. Lowell, who was present, as a spectator, he testified to the numerous assembly the cordial pleasure it afforded him to recognize the face of his old friend, with whom, as he expressed it, he had taken sweet counsel more than forty years before. We have the fullest authority for stating, that Mr. Lowell is never heard, even to this day, to mention the name of his deceased friend, without bearing an affectionate and emphatic testimony to his superior talents and distinguished piety.

The following extract from a letter, addressed to us by the Rev. William Myles, bearing date July, 1822, is descriptive of Mr. Benson's character.

"In the year 1782," says Mr. Myles, "I became acquainted with Mr. Benson, and had the pleasure and profit of labouring with him in the Leeds Circuit, from August, 1796, to August, 1797. That Circuit, at the beginning of the former period, was much agitated by fierce contentions, respecting Mr. Kilham's expulsion from the Methodist Connexion, and the extraordinary innovations in the economy of Methodism, for which he was a strenuous advocate. In the midst of those destructive contentions, Mr. Benson's wisdom, prudence, and charity, shone conspicuously; and before the end of the year, we were favoured with peace and prosperity in that old and respectable Circuit. I had the honour of labouring with him in the London Circuit, from the year 1802 to 1803; and, as at the latter period he was appointed Editor, I was favoured with the advantage of his counsels and labours to August 1804. Being stationed in London a second time, from 1812 to 1814, I enjoyed similar advantages. From the first of my acquaintance with him to the last, he and I continued, without any interruption, to love as brethren. He was, indeed, a true follower of God. His labours, as a Preacher, a writer, and a disciplinarian, will never be forgotten amongst the Wesleyan-Methodists."

From a letter, bearing date Bradford, February 14, 1822, written by the Rev. Joseph Entwisle, we give the following extracts:—

"There are a few aged persons in this Circuit who acknowledge Mr. Benson as their father in Christ; one of whom found peace with God under a sermon he preached at Halifax, in the year 1777, from which time he has enjoyed the spirit of adoption.

"Great numbers in this Circuit, who were profited by his labours in the years 1782 and 1783, and afterwards during the course of his occasional visits, highly esteem and reverence Mr. Benson. But his praise is in all the churches. I esteem it one of the many favours conferred upon me by Divine Providence, that I enjoyed an intimacy with him for many years, and spent six in London during his residence there. Often, while I lived near him in City-Road, did his diligence speak loudly to me.—At night, so late as eleven o'clock, his light was unextinguished, and at five in the morning, he was found in his study again. This was uniformly the case; and while I often observed it from my own room, I admired his conduct, and felt a desire to imitate him as far as practicable.

"During the two years I was at the Chapel-House, City-Road, he seldom was absent from the meeting of the Local Preachers, at breakfast, on Sunday morning; and, on those occasions, his conversations on various theological subjects were so highly instructive to the brethren, that they will be long remembered by many of them with pleasure and profit."

With the dead languages, Mr. Benson was very familiar; and so frequently and carefully had he perused the Greek Testament, that he could repeat nearly, verbatim, every passage it contains. With the Hebrew of the Old Testament, he was well acquainted, having attentively read it several times. But whilst he made the Bible his chief study, he did not neglect to read the justly celebrated writings of antiquity, nor such modern works as merit a perusal. After he first found a copy of Homer's Iliad in Mr. Wesley's library, at Newcastle, he applied himself so closely to it, as to read a book each day. He used to note down every particular word as it occurred, with its derivation and meaning, interspersed with short critical remarks. He likewise followed this practice while reading some books of Xenophon, Plato's Dialogues, and certain other authors. With the works of the best English Poets, as well as philosophers and historians, he was also acquainted.

As a Minister of Christ, until almost *constantly* engaged in preparing theological works for the press, he considered a day as nearly wasted in which he did not preach *once, twice, or oftener*. He constantly sacrificed his own ease, and, in order to be fully employed in the work of the ministry, refused to yield to the earnest wishes of his dearest friends and relatives. While engaged in the most diligent and self-denying labours in the cause of God, so far was he from glorying in himself, that he never allowed his services to be mentioned with praise.

His texts were often chosen with a reference to the season, or some passing events. He always preached on the subjects of the fasts and festivals of the Church as they occurred; nor did he omit to improve, to

the advantage of all such as were disposed to hear him, seasons of public amusement, when multitudes were assembled.

In his sermons, he never called the attention of the people to any trivial or merely entertaining subject. On points of *curious* speculation or criticism he never dwelt, but constantly inculcated the essential doctrines of Christianity, together with its precepts, promises, and threatenings. He spent much time in preparing for the pulpit; and hence, his sermons were fraught with pure divinity skilfully arranged. But his expectation of success was wholly from the Lord, to whom he looked for liberty in speaking, and a blessing on what he delivered.

He had well studied the evidences of his faith; and, believing that the spread of infidel opinions was to be chiefly attributed to ignorance of those evidences, he was in the habit of bringing them forward in his sermons as occasion required.

Of time he was a great economist. Through his conviction of its value, and his eagerness to acquire useful knowledge, he avoided, as much as possible, the company of the careless and trifling; but when he could not do this, he prayed for power to conduct himself towards them in a manner becoming his sacred office; and this he did upon all occasions.

He disliked high profession, when not accompanied with a suitable sense of sin and spiritual deficiency.

He was remarkable for the facility and success with which he could engage his mind in devout meditation on a variety of subjects; for instance, on the immortality of the soul, personal identity, the future happiness of the righteous, &c.

The natural warmth of his temper, which he carefully studied to mortify, was to him, often through life, a source of grief and temptation. But his most intimate friends can testify, that it was only what he conceived to be reprehensible, which excited his indignation; and that in his bosom anger did not find a resting place.

The reluctance with which he frequently attended the Conference, had its origin, not in any defect of love to his brethren; for he loved them most cordially; but in the high estimate he set upon leisure and retirement, and his unwillingness that any circuit should be left without a tolerable supply of suitable Preachers.

A more consistent, warm-hearted Christian patriot than he, cannot easily be imagined. Had he, with St. Paul, been subject to the government of Nero, he would, with that Apostle, have inculcated civil obedience as a Christian duty. But he had the happiness of being a British subject, and consequently of living under a government which his well-instructed reason approved; a government which, taking it for all in all, is the best with which any country has ever been favoured. Of his patriotism many infallible proofs appear in the preceding Narrative.

Though, in general, favoured with good health, he was frequently called to endure much personal affliction, but often, and abundantly more, by sympathizing with one or more of his family and friends. Of sufferings he was exquisitely sensible, but while he prayed that they might be mitigated or removed, the language of his heart was, "Nevertheless, Father, not my will, but thine be done." In all he endured, he acknowledged the wisdom and goodness of God, who, for the purpose of promoting the best interests of all who devote themselves to him, overrules all events.

Numerous proofs might be adduced to show, that Mr. Benson was one of the most disinterested of men; but the following may suffice. In his office of Editor, he doubled the size of the Methodist Magazine, and for a series of years published another periodical work entitled "The Youth's Instructor and Guardian." He edited an octavo edition of Wesley's Works, in seventeen volumes, and an edition of Fletcher's, in nine volumes of the same size. Of the Christian Library, now republishing at the Conference Office, he edited eleven volumes octavo. And besides these he edited many other works. He likewise, during the course of his Editorship, wrote an excellent Life of the Rev. John Fletcher, and his "Apology," besides various sermons. Independent of writing his large, orthodox, and learned Commentary upon the Holy Scriptures, he might be said to have been abundant in literary labours; but when we add to them that excellent work, completed in the course of eight years, our astonishment is excited. And yet, notwithstanding the extraordinary tasks which he imposed upon himself, and performed with the greatest diligence as well as care, he absolutely refused the least remuneration; nor was his income any more than that of any other Preacher in the London East Circuit; and when the Conference at Manchester, in 1815, voted him £500, not as a reward for his labours, but as a mark of their approbation, no entreaties could prevail with him to accept either the whole, or any part of that sum.

The regularity with which he attended to the work of the ministry, rendered it impracticable for him to hear many discourses from the pulpit; but when opportunities offered for that purpose, he gratefully embraced them, whether the Preachers were men of superior or inferior abilities. The eagerness manifested by too many professors to exalt their favourite Preachers at the expense of depreciating others, though confessedly men possessed of piety, zeal, and every other requisite for the ministry, was to him a source of grief. From principle he was strongly and habitually opposed to the sectarian, dividing spirit, which to the injury of their souls, induces numbers to say, in effect, "I am of Paul; and I am of Apollos." He well knew that it is possible for many to admire and extol the abilities of a Preacher, without receiving any edification in righteousness by his ministry.

Through every stage of his Christian course, Mr. Benson was mighty in prayer. In the performance of that important duty, he made all his requests known unto God, with respect to himself, his family, the church, and the world at large. Repeatedly did he receive most remarkable and satisfactory answers to his petitions in behalf of himself, Mrs. Benson, and other branches of his family.

Living and walking, by faith, and consequently seeing the littleness and vanity of all in which the men of the world seek their chief happiness, he was remarkable for spiritual-mindedness. Considering himself as a stranger and pilgrim on earth, and habitually sensible of the importance of eternal realities, he rose superior to the joys and sorrows of this life. Hence, with the ardour of a man of God, he laboured for the advancement of Christ's kingdom; and every indication of success was to him a ground of much consolation.

Alive to the best interests of all the individuals composing his family, he steadily and conscientiously performed the duties incumbent on him as a husband, a father and a master. In addition to setting before his children the constant example of an eminently holy life, he exerted himself with the utmost care and diligence for the purpose of communicating to them correct views of true Christianity in all its branches. Placed at the head of a family, he felt the responsibility of that situation; and hence, with a happy mixture of wisdom, prudence, firmness, and love, he maintained his authority. The exquisite sense which he always manifested of what is right and proper, as well as of its opposite, joined to his constitutional warmth of temper, and the energy with which he was in the habit of expressing himself upon every interesting subject which he treated, possibly induced some to imagine that he did not occupy a place in the first rank of affectionate parents. But the fact is, that he did; and his being opposed to such imbecility as old Eli manifested, (1 Sam. ii. 24,) was not only compatible with, but an effect of, the most tender paternal love. Never, perhaps, was a parent more revered and beloved by his offspring than he was, and is, to this day, by his surviving children, all of whom cherish his memory with a filial affection, becoming the children of so excellent a parent. They continue to recollect with gratitude his unremitting care to improve their minds, and promote their spiritual welfare; nor have they, nor will they ever forget, how particular he was in causing them to attend the public worship of God, nor the special care he took, previous to the administration of the Eucharist, to impress upon their minds the reasons for which it was instituted, and how it ought to be received.

Thoroughly sensible that wealth has a natural tendency to rivet the affections to earth, and with what difficulty any of its possessors shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, he did not seek, either for himself or children, the riches of this world. Circumstanced as he was, though

respectably, in civil life, not one good man in a hundred would have scrupled to receive, either for himself or children, the sums which he could not be prevailed upon to accept. His constant prayer for his children, was, not that they might be rich, but that they might have food and raiment, and possess a title to, and a meetness for, the Divine inheritance.

He delighted to notice the wisdom, justice, and goodness of Divine Providence, in its various dispensations towards, not only kingdoms and empires, but communities and individuals. With him the doctrine of God's government of the universe, including all its parts, was a favourite subject, by repeatedly dwelling upon which he promoted the edification of thousands who attended on his ministry.

On matters which did not effect the essence of true religion, he allowed great latitude of opinion, and hence read with pleasure and profit the best works of many great and good men, who embraced the doctrine of Particular Redemption. Divine *love*, not matters of *opinion*, he knew to be the bond by which all true believers are so united in one as to constitute Christ's mystical body.

For that vigour of mind with which he firmly grasped his subjects, and that comprehensive judgment by which he could trace them to their bearings and tendencies, Mr. Benson was remarkable. To both of these we may in a great degree attribute his decided opposition to every *unnecessary* change in the economy of Methodism. In several respects he resembled the learned, pious, and judicious MELANCTHON, but especially in the suspicion with which he viewed every innovation, not demanded by conscience, or the imperiousness of circumstances. This suspicion, with the cautious conduct resulting from it, in both the one and the other of these great and good men, in conjunction with its immediate and remote effects, contributed largely towards preventing the adoption of such rash measures as would have been essentially injurious to the interests of vital religion.

Possessed of a strong and sound understanding, which he cultivated with uncommon diligence from early youth, and carefully studying the Scriptures in the languages of the sacred penmen, with the assistance of the best commentaries, he obtained a clear, consistent, and comprehensive view of all the doctrines and duties of Christianity. He duly estimated a system of scriptural truth, and was able and willing, whenever an occasion offered for the purpose, to defend every part of it, by conclusive arguments drawn from Scripture and reason.

For tenderness of heart, and compassion towards the distressed, Mr. Benson was justly famed. Numerous instances might be adduced, of his being melted into tears whilst pleading the cause of the children of poverty and affliction, as well as of his readiness to contribute to the relief of their necessities.

His Christian prudence, which was equally distant from timidity on the one hand, and precipitation on the other, was acknowledged by all who possessed a thorough knowledge of his character. That his earnest and unremitting endeavours to promote peace amongst the followers of Christ, did not originate in a defect of courage, is evident from the intrepidity and presence of mind, with which he conducted every controversy, whether in or out of Conference, in which he deemed it his duty to engage. It does not appear that his strictest observers ever accused him of precipitation.

In the management of his household affairs, he carefully shunned both meanness and imprudent expenditure. He rarely bought any thing upon credit; but when he did, he never suffered the bills of his tradesmen to remain long unpaid.

As a man of sense, piety, and erudition, he occupied a high ground; and as an Author, his numerous publications prove that he was eminently qualified for the task of clearly stating, and ably defending, every branch of scriptural theology. But our respect and admiration are most excited by his ministerial labours. The REV. ROBERT HALL, of Leicester, after hearing him preach in his chapel, on being asked by a friend, "How did you like him?" replied, "Very much indeed; he is all you described him; his sermon reminded me more of Demosthenes than any preaching I ever heard before."

But in recording Mr. Hall's merited eulogium, we are far from attributing the success of Mr. Benson's labours to his eloquence; for great and justly admired as it was, independent of Divine influence, it would have been found as incapable of producing any moral or religious effect, as a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord."

In short, fully persuaded of our inability to do more than give a faint and imperfect sketch of Mr. Benson's character, we conclude, by saying, "He watched in all things, endured afflictions, did the work of an Evangelist, and made full proof of his ministry."

On a plain Tomb of Portland Stone, erected to Mr. Benson's Memory by his family, the following Epitaph is inscribed.

In Memory of the
REV. JOSEPH BENSON,
 Who, by the grace of God,
 For more than half a century,
 Devoted his superior talents,
 With indefatigable diligence and Apostolic zeal,
 To the service of the **CHURCH OF CHRIST.**

Sound in doctrine,
 Scriptural, comprehensive, and practical in his Discourses,
 Faithful and earnest in his Exhortations,
 Conscious of the Authority of the Sacred Office,
 And ardently desirous of the salvation of souls,
 The Great **HEAD** of the **CHURCH,**
 Crowned his endeavours with signal success,
 In the conversion of sinners,
 And in building up believers in their most holy faith,

His numerous Publications,
 But especially his large and valuable
 Commentary upon the Holy Scriptures,
 Prove that he was
 A man of solid learning, and an eminent Divine.

Active, disinterested, and unwearied
 In his exertions to promote pure religion,
 He desisted not,
 Even when the infirmities of nature rapidly advanced,
 From his accustomed labours,
 Both as a Writer and Preacher,
 Till he was summoned to receive his reward,
 Through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ,
 In whom he died, Feb. 16th 1821,
 Aged 73 Years.

APPENDIX.



[The following CHARACTER OF MR. BENSON was given at the Close of the Sermon preached on the occasion of his death, at the City-Road Chapel in London, on Friday, March 2, 1821, by the REV. JABEZ BUNTING; and afterwards published, by the direction of the METHODIST CONFERENCE, in their Magazine.]

IN the number of our *venerable Dead*, whom we are under the most solemn obligations to “follow,” in “faith and patience,” until, like them, we shall be called to “inherit the promises,” we have now to include the justly revered name of JOSEPH BENSON.

If even Mr. Wesley could modestly apply to himself, apologetically, in speaking of his *Short Life of Mr. Fletcher*, the remark, that “None but an Apelles can paint an Alexander,” how much more shall such an one as I am need excuse for the presumption which may be justly imputed to me, if I endeavour to delineate the christian and ministerial portraiture of Mr. Benson. I am told, however, that, on account of the office which I have the honour to hold, for the present year, in the Methodist Connexion, I owe it to those who kindly placed me in it, to pay, (as I can, if not as I would,) this public tribute of their gratitude and esteem to the memory and labours of their lamented friend, now with God. On this ground of official obligation only, I shall apply myself to the work, remembering that the chief end of such a Sketch is the edification of survivors; and that though it will be but an imperfect outline, it may, by the divine blessing, answer that purpose, because most of my hearers can improve and fill it up by their own vivid recollections of the manifold worth and excellencies of our departed Friend. For I address a Congregation to whom, in general, I may say, as Paul to Timothy, You have long and “fully known” his “doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, and patience.”

In attempting this Outline, I shall direct your attention, first, to his PERSONAL CHARACTER, as a private Christian; and, secondly, to his PUBLIC CHARACTER, as a Minister of Christ.

I. In reference to his personal character as a Christian, the following observations have occurred to my mind.

1. His Conversion from sin to God was clear, sound, and decided.—Of this you can have no doubt after the extract which you have heard from his Diary, written at the time. In that extract, the great essentials of a true conversion are strongly marked:—*Conviction* of actual sin, of the natural depravity which is its source, of the moral helplessness which

is its concomitant, and of the awful exposure to divine wrath and endless ruin, which is its effect:—*Godly sorrow*, the result of this conviction, working repentance towards God, with earnest prayer for pardon and grace, and other fruits meet for such repentance:—*Faith*, in the testimony of the Gospel concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, and in *Him* as declared, in that testimony, to be the only and the all-sufficient Saviour of sinners, able and willing, by his atoning blood, and almighty Spirit, to save unto the uttermost those who are “without money or price,” without merit or might of their own:—And, finally, in consequence of this act of faith on Christ as “the Lord our Righteousness,” *the reception into the heart of the promised Spirit*, both as “the Comforter,” witnessing to the believer his pardon, and adoption into God’s family, and thereby filling him with a peace which passeth understanding, and as a Sanctifier, working in him a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness, which are evidenced by habitual holiness of heart and life.—Such was the conversion of Mr. Benson, as described, briefly and in substance, by his Dairy, and as I have had the pleasure repeatedly of hearing him describe it, more fully and circumstantially, in conversation. From this conversion flowed all his subsequent excellency as a Christian; it was this “grace of God, bringing salvation,” that in fact *made him a Christian*, planted in him the elements of all christian virtues, and prepared him for every good word and work.

2. The grace thus received he habitually retained; and in it he increased with the increase of God. He rested not in the first principles or rudiments of christian doctrine or experience, but went on unto perfection, walking in Christ whom he had received, and fighting the good fight of faith; and he was found, as we trust and believe, in the possession of that entire “*Sanctification of the Spirit*,” on which he often strongly insisted, as essential to our final salvation. For a considerable period, indeed, his finished preparation for a better country, that is, an heavenly, was manifest to all who knew him. He often spoke in strong terms of the spiritual benefit which he had lately derived from preparing for the press the earlier volumes of a new edition of the *Christian Library*: and it was very apparent from his conversation, that the reperusal of that excellent Collection of experimental and practical Divinity, had been greatly blessed to his soul. I will quote here the words of one, whose name, could I be permitted to mention it, would add the greatest weight to her testimony:—

“He diligently sought, and attained in an eminent degree, that transformation of mind by the renewal of the inner man, which made him meet to share the inheritance of the saints in light. Of late years, his conversation among his friends often reminded them of his growing meetness for glory; and his approaches to our Father’s Throne in our social interviews, discovered such an entering into the holiest through

the Blood of the Covenant, as caused many of his friends to think that our Lord was preparing him for open vision. He walked by faith, and for some considerable time before he joined our elder brethren, he seemed to live in the element of love."

3. In looking at what I conceive to have been the *peculiar characteristics* of Mr. Benson's personal piety, I cannot but particularize the advantage which it derived, as to its stability, its beautiful uniformity, and its general efficiency, from his having so carefully studied, in reference to his own interest in them, the evidences and the Doctrines of Divine Revelation. In these branches of religious knowledge, his understanding was thoroughly cultivated, and well-principled. He knew *why*, as well as "in whom," he had believed; and thus laid the foundation for a remarkably firm and unshaken confidence in the Word, the Grace, and the Providence of God, which, sustained by divine influence and power, was to his soul like an anchor sure and steadfast, and almost set at defiance all the subtlety and force of temptation, on such subjects. Of him it might eminently be said, "In understanding he was *a man*." This gave a corresponding manliness and vigour to his piety in general; and having become habitual, perhaps influenced, in part, the tone of his feelings and conversation in his last sickness, which was that of strong faith, rather than of strong excitement, and exhibited most prominently a calm, settled, and tranquil confidence, in a Saviour, on whose merits, might, and faithfulness, he had long reposed such implicit reliance, that he never thought of doubting their continued exercise in his favour. On one point, connected with this article, Mr. Benson was wont to express his opinion with peculiar decision; I mean, the propriety and necessity, in these days of rebuke and blasphemy, of fortifying the minds of young people, and of Christians in general, against the assaults of infidelity, by an accurate acquaintance with the Evidences external, as well as internal, of our holy Religion. And he was always equally decided, as to the apostacies from religious profession, and other mischievous consequences, which result, in very many cases, from neglecting to inform the judgments of persons who appear to be the subjects of Divine awakenings, or of other gracious and hopeful affections, and from their want of more careful instruction in christian doctrines and duties. On this principle, he strenuously enforced on all Christians, the perusal of the Holy Scriptures; and recommended *catechetical labours* to Parents, and other Teachers of the Young, as essential to permanent success.

4. Mr. Benson was distinguished by remarkably strong and realizing impressions of the eternal world, of the brevity and uncertainty of time, and of the insignificance of those things which are seen and temporal, except as they stand in connection with the things unseen and eternal. I think I have met with no man who appeared so powerfully to feel, and who so affectingly described, the supreme importance of that everlasting

state, to which we are hastening. Whether he was ever a close student of the Practical Works of the great Richard Baxter, I have no means of ascertaining; but he strikingly resembled, in this particular, that extraordinary man, and invaluable writer, who pre-eminently lived and acted under the feeling that he was "a dying man among dying men." From these lively apprehensions of eternity resulted, by the Divine blessing, Mr. Benson's holy deadness to this world, in which he greatly excelled, and has left to all who knew him a most illustrious example. Like "the spirits late escap'd from earth," he, even while yet among us seemed to have "the truth of things full blazing on his eye," and "look'd astonish'd on the ways of men, whose life's whole drift is to forget their graves." To love this world, so as to seek, supremely or anxiously, its transitory honours, or pleasures, or wealth, appeared to him a thing, not only injurious, but absolutely ridiculous; and I have sometimes seen him ready at once to laugh at the absurdity of such conduct, and to weep over its criminality and danger. And by his own habitual self-denial,—his mortified life,—his extraordinary disinterestedness,—and his abstinence from every thing like greediness of filthy lucre, or making, in any mean or dishonourable sense, a gain of godliness, and of his influence in the Church of Christ, for himself or for his family,—he evinced the sincerity of those feelings to which he often gave utterance in reference to these subjects. I shall here again quote the impressive testimony of one of his oldest and most judicious friends.

"I was not personally acquainted with him till 1773. He was then a most devoted and spiritual young man. A few years afterwards, he was appointed for the Bradford Circuit: his popularity was at that time surprisingly great; but his deep humility kept him from the snares to which the just partiality of his friends, and the injudicious praises of some of his hearers, exposed him. Wherever his preaching was published, crowds of our Yorkshire friends came from all quarters; and though in following years he was often stationed in our principal Circuits, every added year seemed only to increase the estimation in which the people held him, both as a public and private character. In regard to the first, thousands knew him well, and all could bear their testimony, that he was an 'able minister of the New Testament.' As to the second, his excellence was best known and appreciated by his relatives and most intimate friends; but his deadness to the world was visible to all.—All who saw and conversed with our dear departed Brother, could not but acknowledge, that though in the world, he was not of the world. He was not satisfied without obeying the apostolic direction, 'Be not conformed to this world.'"

5. From the same general views and feelings, wrought in him by the Holy Spirit, which produced so remarkable a deadness to this world, resulted another prominent excellence in the character of our venerable Friend; I mean, his extraordinary Diligence in the improvement of

time, and his assiduous application to the studies, and other labours, connected with his calling and station. He did not declaim on the emptiness of the world, and cry out, "Surely every man walketh in a vain show, surely they are disquieted in vain," with a view to excuse himself from a serious and unremitting attention to the duties which he owed to that world, and to the important relations by which he stood connected with it. Nor did he, because he felt himself a stranger and a pilgrim, allow himself to trifle with his work, and indulge in inglorious ease and sloth. What he was in his Circuits, while an Itinerant, in this respect, I can only judge from the analogy afforded by his subsequent diligence, and from the uniform testimony of others; but since his settlement in London, I have had the means of personally knowing his intense and unwearied activity in his official occupations. He was truly "in labours more abundant." He was indeed greatly favoured in a constitution of body, which was very unfairly represented by the feebleness of his outward appearance; for it was more than ordinarily robust and vigorous, and continued to be so, till a very late period of life. But it was a still greater blessing, that he knew the responsibility attached to such a talent, and was "in his element when he was in his work." Probably, like many other aged Ministers, he might in the later stages of his life, carry this generally laudable feeling to an extreme. It is possible, that if he had, for a few years past, been willing to relax and moderate his exertions, his various labours would have ultimately gained by their protracted duration more than they would have lost by the restriction of their daily amount. But he knew not how to spare himself; and it was no uncommon thing, even of late, for him to occupy his study, with but few and inconsiderable intervals from literary and pious toil, from four o'clock in the morning, until ten or eleven at night.

6. Mr. Benson was eminent in that important part of purity of heart, which consists in Simplicity of Intention. He often urged on others, and by special prayer and frequent self-examination endeavoured to cultivate in himself, a constant regard to the authority of God, and a supreme desire to please and glorify him, in the whole conduct of life. In this endeavour, there is reason to believe, he was greatly succeeded by the Holy Spirit; so that his Brethren, if ever they allowed themselves humbly to think that he was, when he differed from them on any matter of public business, erroneous in judgment, gave him implicit credit for singleness of eye, and never revered him more unfeignedly than when they felt themselves compelled to dissent, in any instance, from his conclusions or recommendations. No man, perhaps, exercised a more general, or a more deserved and beneficial influence, over his friends and associates; because every one who knew him was satisfied of his unimpeachable integrity, and universal conscientiousness.

7. The Benevolence of our departed Friend ought not to be overlooked in this sketch. Sympathy with the afflicted and distressed was not, however, with him so much a matter of mere feeling, as of principle and obligation; but when satisfied that the duty existed in any particular case, he entered on it with zeal and manifest affection. The grace of God had disposed him to put on bowels of mercy. Where *himself* only was concerned, he did not appear to me to be a man of quick sentiment, or easily roused to tender emotion; but the sorrows and sufferings of others always moved him to pity. Though his personal habits, I believe, were frugal, from conscience towards God, his heart and his hand were liberal. To his friends he was hospitable; to the poor and destitute he was willing to communicate. There was nothing by which tenderness of spirit appeared so soon and powerfully excited in him, as by tales of woe and privation. With how many tears has he often read, in this and other congregations, those Cases of Distress which it is usual to bring forward at the annual appeal made in all our Chapels in London, on behalf of the *Strangers' Friend Society*;—a Charity which owed much to his powerful advocacy and influence, especially during the earlier period of his residence in the Metropolis, when he was the Superintendent of this Circuit.—For many years, all our religious and benevolent Institutions have reaped much benefit from the willing and hearty exertion of his extraordinary talents, in recommending their objects to public favour and support.

8. I shall only mention further, in speaking of his *Christian Character*, the unfeigned Humility, which, I firmly believe, was habitual to his mind, and crowned all his other graces. His attainments, intellectual and moral, were of no common order; but that was a fact on which, as far as I could observe, he never appeared to allow himself to dwell, and of which, indeed, in reference to his religious eminence, I never could discover any indication that he was himself conscious. His views of the Divine Purity and Justice were peculiarly solemn, and perhaps somewhat awful in their effect on his habitual feeling towards God, though tempered and softened by his steadfast faith in the discoveries and provisions of the Gospel. Hence he compared himself with the highest and holiest standards; and might of course be sensible of many deficiencies, which others, of views less strict, and habits less rigidly conscientious, would have overlooked in themselves. One thing is certain, that in life and death, he had no plea on which he dared, or was disposed, to rely for acceptance, and right to life, but the merits of the Saviour's blood, and the gracious promises of the New Covenant. At the close of his signally useful life, and after a Ministry of fifty years, honoured with a visible and manifest success not often paralleled, he repeatedly and emphatically declared to me, and as you have heard to others, "I am saved

by grace only, through Faith." Thus he looked for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.

II. In reference to the public character of Mr. Benson as a Minister of Christ, I deem it necessary to mention the following particulars.

1. He was "a scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven," and able to "bring forth out of his treasure things new and old." Of him it may be truly said, that he was "mighty in the Scriptures;" with which, in their original languages, he was familiarly conversant. With the Greek Testament, especially, he was accurately acquainted. He frequently quoted it, even in social conversations, on subjects of Divinity; and often happily availed himself, in the pulpit, of the illustrations suggested to him by his critical knowledge of its peculiar beauties and idioms. He was well skilled in every branch of Systematic and Polemical Theology. His opinions were the same, on all great doctrinal questions, with those which are well known as characterizing the living ministry and printed works of Mr. Wesley and Mr. Fletcher. These he firmly believed to be revealed in the Holy Scriptures; and for the authority of that volume, convinced as he was of its divinity and inspiration, he had a profound reverence. Its testimony, once ascertained, he allowed not himself, for a moment, to question or to modify. He viewed it as "the judgment of God's mouth;" and had acquired the all-important habit of bowing at once to its decisions. At a very early period, indeed, of his ministry, there was one doctrine of Christianity which, for a time, he was disposed, (in consequence of having read a book which speculates, perhaps unwarrantably, on certain "deep things of God,") not to *deny* but to *explain in a particular manner*, partaking more of human refinement than of scriptural simplicity and soundness. This, however, was but a temporary perplexity; and he was afterwards distinguished by his peculiarly correct and decided views of every point connected with that subject. The tribute so honourably paid in this place, by DR. ADAM CLARKE, on the day of his interment, to his pre-eminence as a profound and able Divine, I have heard, in terms equally strong and unqualified, from the lips of no incompetent judges, who do not belong to our own Connexion.—One of his excellencies, as a Theologian, is well described in the following extract of a letter from an aged Minister in our Body,—himself known to his intimate friends as distinguished by the strict and discriminating accuracy of his theological views:—"He had a mind capable of embracing the whole analogy of faith, and at the same time of minutely analyzing it. He readily discerned where truth, pushed beyond its proper limits, verged on error. At the same time, his heart, influenced by the Holy Spirit, received that truth in all its power, so that it became in him a living and operative principle. Hence his expositions of the Scriptures were clear, distinct,

and full; while his applications to the consciences and hearts of his hearers were powerfully, and sometimes irresistibly impressive, and reminded me often of the most pointed parts in the works of Richard Baxter. He was indeed a burning and a shining light."

2. Mr. Benson, as a *Preacher*, had perhaps fewer faults, and more excellencies, than ordinarily fall to the lot of one servant of Christ, however gifted.—His ministry of the word was soundly evangelical; but guarded against antinomian perversions of the Gospel with a remarkable degree of anxiety, for which the part he bore, in early life, in transactions connected with certain theological controversies, will naturally account, and which the tendency, even yet discoverable in some part of the professing world, to run into such perversions, may go far to justify. Christ should be preached boldly and freely; but he should also be preached fully and consistently, in all his offices, as a Saviour from sin, as well as from hell.—His Ministry was scriptural, not metaphysically subtle, nor modishly sentimental. His subjects, arguments, and illustrations, were all derived from the Book of which he was called to be the expounder to his hearers; and, even among scriptural topics, he was religiously scrupulous to select those which were most important, and most suited to the state and necessities of the people.—His ministry was, as to its manner, plain, but dignified. He paid little attention to the mere graces and elegances of style. But he was powerfully argumentative in his addresses to the understanding, and often, as you have heard, irresistibly energetic in his appeals to the conscience. "Knowing the terror of the Lord," he "persuaded men" to repentance; and could most instructively and delightfully dilate, for the comfort of Penitents and the edification of Believers, on the "glory of God" as seen "in the face of Jesus Christ," and the unsearchable riches of wisdom and goodness displayed in the scheme of the Gospel. Here he never failed to discover the powers of a Master in the sacred art; and, what was still better, "the Unction of the Holy One," which rested on him and on his auditories, was often overwhelmingly glorious, and the Word of God, dispensed by him, was "as a fire, and as a hammer which breaketh the rock in pieces." In these characteristics of his preaching, Mr. Benson had no superior, and few equals. And the happy effect of such a ministry, has, I believe, been great, not only on the people, but also on the body of our younger Preachers, who when they have sat with admiration and delight under his sermons at our Annual Conferences, have practically learned in what the real *greatness* of a Preacher of the Gospel consists,—have been led to imitate, though without servility, what God so signally owned in the man they honoured,—and have thus been guarded against substituting, in their own ministry, the chaff for the wheat, the tinsel for the gold, the miserable trappings of an empty and artificial oratory for that scriptural truth, which is, "when unadorned, adorned

the most," and that genuine eloquence, which is inspired by pious feeling, and zeal for the salvation of perishing souls.*

3. In other duties, connected with the Ministerial and Pastoral Office, Mr. Benson was equally distinguished.—He greatly excelled in the richness, the fervency, and the variety of his *Public Prayers*. For the grace and gift of Intercession he was quite remarkable. He much admired that striking composition, the *Litany* of the Established Church, as an almost perfect model in this branch of Public Devotion. I have heard him say, that Christians in general are, in his opinion, very defective in the duty of Intercession; and that he, excepting where he used the help of the Litany, always felt himself condemned for having omitted, in his General Intercessory Prayer in our Sabbath morning worship, some cases which ought to have been distinctly brought before the Throne of Grace by him, as the mouth of the assembled congregation. His Prayers after Sermon were often most solemn, importunate, and successful. Then his powerful pleading with God seemed, as it were to open heaven; and abundant grace descended on multitudes.—In the *Quarterly visitation of the Classes*, which forms so interesting and important a part of the pastoral duty of a Methodist Preacher, he excelled all whom it has been my lot to know. When I was first stationed in London, in the year 1803, I had repeatedly the profit and pleasure to attending him on such occasions; as it was then our custom for two Preachers to go together, on that business, to each class: and I never reflect but with edification on the fidelity, minuteness, and wisdom, with which he inquired into the things most connected with the personal and family godliness of our members, and administered suitable advice and exhortation.—In *Social Visits*, also, he maintained the character and spirit of a man of God. He could be cheerful without levity, and serious without melancholy. His conversation, at such seasons, was often in the highest degree instructive; and calculated permanently to improve the company in christian knowledge and piety. The latest opportunity of this sort which I enjoyed with him, was at the house of a common friend, about six weeks before his death. I believe it was *his last visit* to any but his own family. He was then in a most heavenly frame of mind;—spoke to us, for a long time, on the glory which results to God from the person and work of Jesus Christ the Mediator, and on the immunities and feli-

* I have often thought, that to Mr. Benson his hearers might well apply what King Charles I. is reported to have said in reference to Mr. (afterwards Bishop) Sanderson;—"I carry my ears to hear other preachers; but I carry my conscience to hear Mr. Sanderson."—A friend, on whom I can depend, informs me, that an excellent and justly eminent Clergyman, the late Rev. Mr. Cecil, embraced every opportunity of hearing Mr. Benson, and was much struck with his mode of preaching. On one of these occasions, he made the following remark: "Mr. Benson seems like a Messenger sent from the other world, to call men to account."

cities of the celestial state ;—and concluded by repeating, in a most delightful manner, the following stanzas of one of our hymns :

“ By death and hell pursued in vain,
To thee the ransom'd seed shall come ;
Shouting their heavenly Sion gain,
And pass through death triumphant home.

The pain of life shall there be o'er,
The anguish and distracting care :
There sighing grief shall weep no more,
And sin shall never enter there.

Where pure, essential joy is found,
The Lord's redeem'd their heads shall raise,
With everlasting gladness crown'd,
And fill'd with love, and lost in praise.”

He was then much exhausted ; and requested me to pray, as his voice and strength were nearly gone.

4. As a *Writer*, Mr. Benson was instructive, orthodox, and useful.—He appeared at various times in the arena of controversy ; believing himself called to defend the Truth of the Gospel against the Materialism and Socinianism of Dr. Priestly,—the Morality of the Bible against the follies of Madan,—and the People, Cause, and Work of God, against the high-church intolerance of Tatham, Russell, and others. But the works of most permanent and general value, by which “being dead he yet speaketh,” are his *Life of Mr. Fletcher*, and his *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*. The latter is a work of great labour, and justly characterized by the Conference, in their Vote of Thanks to him for its compilation, as marked by “solid learning, soundness of theological opinion, and an edifying attention to experimental and practical Religion.”*

5. I shall only add a few sentences on the importance of Mr. Benson's example and services to our Connexion, as one of the Fathers, Counsellors, and Guardians of our Body. Here he was truly valuable ; and his principles and practice, in many interesting particulars, will, by many, be gratefully treasured up, and long quoted as among the most respected and sacred of those human authorities, to which in subordination to the Divine Word, we look up with filial reverence.—For the young Preachers of our Itinerancy, and for that respected and very useful Body of Auxiliaries to our regular ministry, the Local Preachers, he felt a fatherly concern ; and was very anxious that they should be wise, and holy, and

* The Edition of this Commentary, printed in *quarto*, is now nearly sold ; but copies of the Edition in Three Volumes, folio, may still be had of Mr. Blanshard. This valuable work is re-printing in America.

faithful in their important work.—Instructed, perhaps, by his own painful experience in a time of great agitation and difficulty, soon after the death of Mr. Wesley, he was subsequently an earnest and decided opponent of all measures tending to division in the Church of Christ; and used his great influence to counteract strife and schism, wherever they made their appearance, and to promote peace and union.—As a Public Man, next to the truth and glory of God, the welfare and comfort of our people were, with him, the grand objects of pursuit. For their peace and profit, he would make any sacrifices consistent with duty.—In so long and active a life as his, and connected as he was with some of the most disputable and difficult affairs of our Body, it could not but happen that, in a few cases, he should differ in opinion and practice with some of his brethren. If any temporary warmth of feeling was excited on such occasions, it had long ago subsided. Our plans being settled and regular, the Connexion has, for many years, enjoyed a general freedom from those subjects of dispute and irritation, which, on the removal of our Founder, disturbed, for a short season, our happy unanimity. And Mr. Benson did himself honour by requesting, not long before his death, that care might be taken not to suffer any of his Papers to be made public, which would unnecessarily revive one painful feeling in any persons, either in or out of our Connexion, with whom he had differed in his views.—I shall conclude my Sketch of his public character, by merely mentioning his ardent desire, often expressed, and practically exhibited, to avoid, for himself, and that our Connexion at large, (according to its primitive calling and profession,) should always avoid, a narrow and sectarian spirit. He strongly felt that we ought steadily to aim, not merely or principally at the increase of our own denomination, as a distinct religious sect and party, but at the promotion of vital and experimental godliness among all Sects and Parties, by every means in our power.

I have thus endeavoured to direct your attention to various excellencies which adorned the PERSONAL and PUBLIC CHARACTER of Mr. Benson. If any ask, “What were his defects, his infirmities, his faults,”—I answer, that whatever they were, they will not be particularized by me in this place.—I know them not, with that distinctness or certainty, which would be necessary to render a public detail of them instructive to others, or even innocent to myself; for I reverence him as a Father, and hope to be eternally grateful for his ministry, under which, in early life, I sat with much profit, and for his friendship, conversation, and example, in subsequent years. Nor do I recognize any rule of duty which binds me to take notice of them at all, in a mere *Sketch* like this, except for the purpose of declaring my conscientious belief, that they were few and trivial in comparison of his many and distinguished virtues. Whatever of this nature I at any time observed, during my acquaintance with him,

grew very much, I think, out of the circumstances of comparative seclusion from general society, in which he was, of late years, placed. He was so perfectly busy in doing his own work, that he knew not, in many cases, how much was doing by others; and might thus be led to under-rate the good which is actually in progress, in the Church of Christ, and in the world, and to indulge views of men and things more gloomy than just or accurate. But even such mistaken views generally made him weep over, rather than satirize, or cynically and malevolently *proclaim*, the evils of which he thought there was some reason to be apprehensive. He “sighed and cried” for what he judged to be amiss or defective; and for such holy exercises, it must be allowed, there is always, in this mixed and imperfect state, sufficient occasion, even on the most favourable view that can be soberly indulged.

“Them that honour me I will honour,”—This gracious rule of the divine government is eminently illustrated in the case of Mr. Benson.

1. He was signally honoured in the remarkable success of his Ministry. Few men, in modern times, have been so useful in awakening the careless and worldly from the slumbers of sin, and in “winning souls” to God. The persons converted by his instrumentality, in various parts of this kingdom, have been very numerous; of whom “some are fallen asleep” in Jesus, and others “remain unto this present,” evincing by their holy and consistent lives the genuineness of their religious experience. In Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Manchester, Halifax, Leeds, Hull, and the populous vicinities which surround those places, and which formed a part of the Circuits attached to them in the earlier periods of Mr. Benson’s labours, this success was particularly striking; and the fruit of his “preaching and living” has been permanent. Some very extraordinary instances of “the overwhelming power of saving grace,” which attended his ministry, are related on unquestionable authority; and prove that “God was with him of a truth.”

2. He was honoured in the high esteem and reverence which his piety, talents, and usefulness, obtained for him, from his Brethren in the Ministry, and from our Societies at large. How many thousands of excellent persons are now pouring their grateful blessings on his memory, and following his flight to glory with the exclamation, “My Father! my Father! The chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.” Your cordial concurrence in these affectionate sentiments towards the venerable deceased, has been sufficiently evinced by the circumstances which lately characterized his public funeral, and by those which mark the present solemnity. Of the feelings of his friends in the country some idea may be conveyed by the following extracts from letters, just received; which I gladly read, because they furnish convincing proofs of what I have stated concerning Mr. Benson’s great usefulness, as well as of the high place which he deservedly occupied in public esteem.

A Letter from Bradford, Yorkshire, contains these observations :

“Mr. Benson was always in the habit of improving time when he attended our Annual Conferences, by preaching very frequently. He therefore made excursions, and preached in neighbouring Circuits. At the last Leeds Conference, though so far advanced in years, he preached on the same day, twice at Bradford, and once at Halifax, to immense crowds.

“At one Leeds Conference, (I believe in 1781,) he went over to Birstal, and preached on the Lord’s day. The congregation was large.—He discoursed on Heb. xi. 7, *in his best style*. It is said that *fifty* persons were awakened under that sermon, amongst whom were Mr. John Nelson, and a pious, steady Leader at Clayton, who gave me this account.

“Mr. Benson’s labours in this Circuit (which then included Halifax, &c.,) were abundantly blessed to the conversion and edification of many. He was first stationed here in 1777, and again in 1782, and 1783. God was with him; and the ‘aged disciples’ speak of him with high affection and reverence. A great number also of *comparatively* young members of Society do the same. I account for this, on two grounds: (1.) The conversation of those who were benefited under his ministry: I can recollect, nearly thirty years ago, when I laboured in Halifax Circuit, to have heard such details of Mr. Benson’s sermons, Prayers, and manner of life, as could not fail to make indelible impressions on all minds possessed of any degree of religious feeling: (2.) His occasional visits, in which he preached the Gospel to vast multitudes with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

“Perhaps, I might add, that his Editorship of our Magazine, his Commentary, &c., tended to keep alive in the minds of the people, in these parts, an affectionate regard for him. You can hardly conceive how much the friends here seem to feel on the occasion of his departure.”

A letter from Hull says,

“Mr. Benson may with truth be said to have been the Apostle of this part of the country. He was appointed for Hull in 1786. The Methodist Society was then few in number, and the chapel in which they worshipped was very small. The Lord owned his labours, and before the following Christmas, the chapel was crowded with hearers; and as the service began at six o’clock in the evening, it was necessary to be there soon after five o’clock to secure a seat. The congregation continued to increase, and a larger place of worship became necessary. Mr. Benson, after surmounting many difficulties, with much labour and exertion, succeeded in raising the Chapel, situated in George-Yard. There is not a place in this Circuit, in which the name of BENSON is not as ointment poured forth. At sundry times, during the period of his station here, the

Holy Spirit was in a most wonderful manner poured out, while he was dispensing the word of life; and many persons now living speak of those times with a high degree of pleasure. He was indeed a Minister of God for good to this people, and they are sure that Hull is deeply indebted to him, under God, for the respectable situation it now holds in the Methodist world."

3. He was divinely honoured in the tranquility of his end. If, in the very last weeks of decay and extreme debility, he had no ecstatic raptures, still he had no fears, no hesitations, no gloomy uncertainties. The Narrative which you have heard of the circumstances of his sickness, and death must have reminded you of that text, "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace."

4. He is now, doubtless, receiving the honours of heavenly glory.—To him we may apply with full confidence, and with a propriety more than common, the words of our blessed Saviour, recorded by St. Luke, "Who then is that FAITHFUL AND WISE steward, whom his Lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? BLESSED is that servant, whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth, I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath." This passage, in my judgment, most strikingly describes the *Character* of Mr. Benson; and, of course, it points out to us the peculiar *blessedness* which he now assuredly enjoys, and shall for ever possess.

[*The Author thinks he should hardly be justified were he to omit to add also the very honourable testimony borne to Mr. Benson's memory by the Conference assembled at Manchester, in 1821, and afterwards published in their Minutes.*]

"He was well read in the Greek and Latin Classics, but the Inspired Writings were his chief study. With them he had an accurate and comprehensive acquaintance, and his mind was richly stored with their sacred treasures. As a writer, he was correct, perspicuous, and argumentative; and his Commentary on the Old and New Testament will long be regarded as one of the most valuable in the English language.—His talents, as a Preacher, were of an extraordinary kind. Distinct and accurate in his representations of divine truth, powerful in argument, inflamed with the love of Christ, and full of compassion for the perishing souls of unconverted men, he frequently appeared in the pulpit like a messenger from the eternal world. His applications at the close of his

sermons were energetic and impressive almost beyond example. On many occasions, when thousands of hearers were hanging on his lips, the special blessing of God accompanied his ministrations; his own mind was deeply affected with the awful realities of eternity; the people wept aloud, and appeared to be bowed down beneath the power of the Holy Spirit; and, in innumerable instances, these impressions were permanent. Few Ministers, in modern times, have been so successful in the conversion of sinners to God; and many spiritual children will be his joy, and the crown of his rejoicing, in the day of the Lord. He continued his pious labours, in the cause of Christ, with unremitting ardour; and maintained, by the grace of God, an elevated character, as a Christian Minister, for more than fifty years, when he gradually sunk under the infirmities of age, and fell asleep in Jesus. In the decline of life his mind was eminently calm and tranquil; he possessed the 'peace of God which passeth all understanding,' his communion with God was deep, and his conversation remarkably spiritual and heavenly."

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